



THE ADVENTURES IN MODERN MUSIC

WIRED

ISSUE 154 • DECEMBER 96 • £2.50 / US \$5.50

Stockhausen
for beginners

Eric Drew Feldman
Life with Capt Beefheart

THE
ILLBIENT
ALLIANCE

Featuring Byzar, Wordsound,
Sub Dub, Soundlab, Bill Laswell, Ben Neill, DJ Olive

**Jeru The
Damaja**
HipHop heroics

**James
Chance's**
jukebox

**Charlemagne
Palestine**

Scanner
down under

Paul Schütze
on film



ELECTRONICA • POST-ROCK • DRUM 'N' BASS • NEW JAZZ & CLASSICAL • GLOBAL

WEIRD, BEAUTIFUL SHIT....



BILL LASWELL
'OSCILLATIONS'
(SUB ROSA) FUTURE
DRUM 'N' BASS



FLUXA
'VERY WELL ORGANIZED'
(CHE IRE) SPACE ROCK



VARIOUS
'THE BROKEN VOICE'
(51 BEARS OF HELL)
FEAT. SCANNER, V-NECK ETC.



VARIOUS
'INCLUSIONS IN ALBION'
(ASPIRODEL) OPS OF SPOOKY,
SUB DOB, DIZAK & WE



T POWER 'WAVEFORM'
(T POWER) CYBERDELIC
DRUM 'N' BASS



OMNI TBO
'THE HAUNTED SCIENCE'
(DROWING SHADOW) FUTURE
DRUM 'N' BASS



REX 'C'
(SOUTHERN) FILE NEXT TO
TYPHOONKAS LAMBROPO



DANIEL BIRO
'THE COMPARATIVE ANALOGY OF ANGELS'
(SARGASSO) 'L'NASS-
ABLE' THE WIRE



UI 'SIDELONG'
(SOUTHERN) DUBBY
KRAUTROCK



HOLY GHOST
'THE MIND CONTROL OF CANDY JONES'
(TREASURE)
PERFECT TECHNO



BROOKLYN DUB CON-
SORTIUM
'CERTIFIED DOPE VOL. 1'
(VORBERGANG) FEAT. BHM,
BILL LASWELL, SCANNER ETC.



SCHULMÄDCHEN
REPORT ('CRIPPLED LUCK')
SLEAZY LISTENING



VAMPIROS LESBOS
'SINFUL DANCE PARTY'
(CRIPPLED LUCK) STRIP HOP



Rachel's
The Sea and the Bells
RACHEL'S 'THE SEA &
BELLS' (COMBUSTION) 'UTTERLY
RECOMMENDED'
- SUNDAY TIMES



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WIRE

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Adam Lawrence

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editor's idea

Franksy, we are shocked. When The Wire became the first UK magazine to run a major feature (a cover feature, even) on the New York mixologist and librettist prole DJ Spooky back in August 1995, little did we suspect it would help precipitate an outbreak of total war.

Even now Spooky is something of a shadowy figure as far as the UK music press is concerned, but back in August of last year he was all but unknown. We had heard of him via heated rumours drifting across the Atlantic of a young, self-styled, black bohemian DJ-cum-low-end-theorist, an apparent cross between Greg Tate, Jean-Michel Basquiat and Mark The 45 King, who was talking up the new sciences of sampladelia and remixology like a Gilles Deleuze of the decks. We only had a vague notion of what Spooky's music actually sounded like, but that didn't seem to matter. His PoMo patter was attempting to extend the debate surrounding some of the most galvanising music of the moment, from abstract best collage to breakfast science. Basically, the DJ talked a good game. That seemed reason enough to stick him on the cover.

Now it's all got ridiculously out of hand. Spooky not being one to hide his might under a bushel, we knew that initial interview would provoke as many people as it would entertain, and sure enough, opinions duly came flying into The Wire office, mostly from America and mostly claiming that we had "given too much respect" to Spooky by putting him on the cover.

Those early exchanges of fire officially escalated into full-scale war in the first weeks of October 1996, with the columns and letters pages of The New York Press serving as the battleground. First, NY Press contributor Adam Heimlich did a no-holds-barred hatchet job on Spooky in his "Weather Vane" column. The flavour of Heimlich's critique can be gauged by the illustration that accompanied it, a caricature of Spooky captioned "DJ Stoop". Spooky duly fired back a wounded, bitter reply, accusing Heimlich, among other things, of being a racist. Then, in the following issues' letters pages, all hell broke loose as NY Press readers responded to Spooky's attack on their man, laying into the DJ like they were honour-roll members of the NYPD's tactical assault squad. "The only problem with Heimlich's piece was that it didn't go far enough into how foul the little fucker —

and all he represents — really is." "Spooky, I have been waiting for a long time to say this you're full of shit." "Spooky" take your fucking holer-than-thou-racist-multiculturalism and shove it way up your own ass." "Spooky" you lame-assed, self-absorbed no talent." "Mr Multicult Dialogue Spooky, you dumb fuck." One reader even alluded to the 'promoter' of Spooky by The Wire and others. "That group of Eurotrash you've got following around with you obviously knows nothing about musical experimentation." Phew. Only in America.

In the midst of a blooming the circumstances that caused war to break out in the first place are usually forgotten. However, at least one of the issues at stake here is a familiar one. Putting aside the fact that Heimlich's article seemed to be based on some very shaky knowledge of the kind of musical initiatives which Spooky connects with (from the Ambient chill-out room through plunderphonics to block-party Spooky), what really seemed to get on his nerves, not to mention those of the NY Press's letter page assassins, was the fact that Spooky had the temerity to talk big about such 'lowly' forms of endeavour as Hip-hop, Techno and drum 'n' bass. American writers such as Thos Rose helped pioneer 'serious' exploration of the wild fringes and dark recesses of US pop culture, but as in the UK, America's pathologically cynical music media will still only countenance Spooky's kind of high falutin' talk when it is applied to the towering icons of international pop. If you want to deconstruct the world through the distorting lens of Courtney Love's sex life, well all right. But spinning dense hypotheses out from the virtual realms of hard disk editing systems? Forget it.

All of this seems particularly pertinent as this month's cover story focuses on a number of Spooky's contemporaries in New York's digital underground. This is a diverse group of musicians, ranging from the dub renaissance of the WordSound label to Cultural Alchemy's hypertheorists. What connects them, apart from the fact that they are producing some of the best music around right now, is their refusal to shut up and let the music speak for itself. We look forward to reading The New York Press's response to this new burst of noisy activity, taking place right in its own back yard, in about 18 months' time. **TONY HARRINGTON**

The January 97 issue of The Wire

In which we look back in wonder at the mountain of music we wiggled out in 96

On sale Tuesday 23 December

soundings december

Selected highlights of the month's live events, happenings, club spaces and broadcasts

Special Events



Scuro Xmas Interference Multimedia environment imagined by London's Chiaroscuro collective in a Farmington art space. Musical input comes from DJs and electronic musicians including Germ from GPR Records, Paul Thomas & Scanner, Ignition Music's Pick 'N' Mix selection, PVM (Carbon Base Records), Aquamanda, The Kaleidoscope, and Manchester's Jimpster. The four spaces at the venue will contain a variety of different organic and digital vision ming, as well as Sony Playstation demos. London iHAC, Station Chambers, 55 Turnmill Street, EC1, 6 December, 8pm-2am, 0171 791 0752

Keep 3 Havenock film and experimental music evening fusing sound sculpture, ambisonic recordings, films and improvisation. Former The Heat drummer Charles Hayward plays in duo with sampling string player Katie Matthews, instrument inventor Walter Fabeck plays his chromasone, a MIDI sculpture built of perspex and chrome, operated with data gloves. Morphogenesis member Michael Pime

activates his bio-feedback generator to extract the nose of plant growth, Lepke B doodles with his Densette record player and a bunch of expendable vinyl, singers Alkama and Peter Cusack provide music for Ron Briefe's audio-visual installation, plus Improv and sound art with sound systems by Air Pressure Experimenters and Kymatic. It's all at London ArtHouse, 140 Lewisham Way, 1 December, 6pm, £4.50/£3.50, 0171 252 9334. For additional info on the Web, goto <http://www.lstech.com/keep>

Musical Inspirations Season of talks with contemporary music makers at London's ICA, aiming to probe their creative catalysts and motivations. This month's discussions feature composers Nicola LeFanu, Odaline De La Martinez and Eleanor Alberga talking about the position of women in the classical industry (4 December), and a seminar with supergroup Stereolab (18). London ICA Nash & Brandon Rooms, 7.30pm, £6.50/£5.50, 0171 930 3647

Measured In Shadows Installation comprising sound, light, objects, assemblages, videos and paintings by

Russell Mills and Ian Walton. Taking over the Tullie House Museum in Carlisle, Walton and Mills, whose *Undark CD* was released last month on Emrt, have filled it with a mound of earth-covered books, random dimmer-switches, and stained glass, in an arrangement inspired by Ancient Greek architectural concepts of shadow-measurement. The exhibition runs between 30 November-19 January at Tullie House Museum, Castle Street, Carlisle, 10am-5pm, 01228 34781, before moving to the Guinness Hopstore in Dublin in February 97

Rude Mechanic As featured in this month's Bites (page 14), this experimental music and body-art season continues into the first week of December. Self-styled Rude Mechanics Hayley Newman and David Crawford perform visualisations of sound provided by Finnish Techno duo Panasonic, and invited guests including Simon Fisher Turner (28 November), Fisher Turner with Susan Stenger (29), Scanner (30), and Bruce Gilbert (1 December), then MIDI violinist Katie Matthews (6), and sound prankster David Gilchrist (7). 5 December is 'open access for Cubase freaks' computers will be available for audience intervention. NB all performances are during the afternoon, 12 noon-6pm, except the closing concert on 7 December (8pm, £5/£3), which features full-on frequencies by Panasonic in tandem with the Rude duo. London Beconsfield, Newport Street, Vauxhall, SE11, £3 project membership gives access to all events, info on 0171 582 6465

Trans/Metaphoria More music 'n' movement, this time in celebration of black lyrical culture, with Maninell poets, Maxine Bunting choreography, computer visuals by Derek Richards and live drum 'n' bass from drummer Marquee Gilmore and sax player Jason Yarde

London Oval House, 52-54 Kennington St, 28 November-1 December, 8pm, £6.50/£3, 0171 582 7680

Winter Music Second run of collaborative concerts at London's Place Theatre by new music champions Piano Circus, who play arrangements of pieces by Future Sound Of London, John Cage, and Brian Eno, Steve Reich's *Sei Pianos*, plus a work by Bruce Gilchrist based on computer interpretations of jazz pianist Niko Yee's brainwave scans. 28-30 November, 8pm, £10/£7 per night, full details on 0171 387 0031

On Stage

Ask Synth and electronics improviser Martin Archer teams up with guitarist John Jasnock in the second of Archer's 'Irradiant Ambient' Lantern Concerts. Leeds Lantern Theatre, Kenwood Park Road, 8 December, 8pm, £3/free, 0114 266 7180

George Clinton & P-Funk Allstars The mothership descends from Planet P with arch-conspirator Clinton in the cargo hold. London Brixton Academy, 6 December, 9pm, £12.50, 0171 924 9999

Fast Three-date stopover for the revised Krautrock art ensemble, with power tools and hay-threshing machine in tow. Free 'Peel Sessions' EP to be given away exclusively at the London gigs. London Garage, 1-2 December, 8pm, £12/£10, 0171 344 0044. Buckley Trio (supported by Ecogram), 5, £7/£6, 01222 235453

Carlos Garnett Two dates by former electric Miles sax player, who owns 70s space-junk classic *Black Love* has recently come to light. London Jazz Cafe, 28-29 November, £12/£10, 0171 344 0044

Manixio Kagel The London Sinfonietta present *Musik Of The Absurd*,

featuring three UK premieres by the 65 year old New Complexity composer London QEH, 1 December, 7.45pm, £12.50-£6, 0171 960 4242

James MacMillan Premiere of new work *The World's Ransoming* for cor anglais and orchestra, Glasgow Royal Concert Hall (4 December, 0141 287 5511), Aberdeen Music Hall (5, 01224 641122), and London Barbican (10, 0171 638 8891) Tickets at all venues £6

Kaffe Matthews Treat yourself to the wild violinists treatments London Hollywood Leather, Brick Lane (plus surprise guests), 14 December, info 0171 729 0773, and with percussionist Ansuman Bhowas at Mela, London Soth, 19, info 0171 247 9747

Mad Professor Echo chamber insanity with South London dubmeister

at the controls London Subterania, 11 December, 8pm, £7, 0181 960 4590

Orchestra Murphy + Greg Lucas/Lepke B + British Summertime Ends LMC jambooree with Lucas/Lepke's plunderphonic meditation on damaged vinyl, BSE with *The Wire's* Clive Bell plus violinist Sylvia Hallitt and Stuart Jones, and avant-ballerades Orchestra Murphy London ICA, 8 December, 7.30pm, £7.50-£5, 0171 930 3647

Plinski Zoo Jan Kropinski's punk-jazz unit rock the boat at a new floating Thameside venue London Ross Leopard, Battersea Wharf, 5 December, 9pm, £6-£5, 0171 498 0548

Squarpusher The master of drum 'n' bass freakebeat, at new South Coast gig venue Brighton The Joint, West St, 11 December, £4-£3

Club Spaces



Moonshrike

Anokha Immersion in the Future Soundz Of India at Talvin Singh's weekly multiculti meeting London Blue Note, Mondays, 10pm-2am, £5-£3, 0171 729 8440

Beat Weed Weekly forays into sonic strangeness and bizarre beats, with The Stereo MCs Rob Birch (1 December), Neotropic (8), Dean Thatcher + Headkilla (15), Lol Hammond/Slab (22), and Dave Tipper from the Fuel label (29) London Jazz Bistro, Sundays, 7pm-midnight, £2, 0171 236 8112

Blood Sugar Regulars Andrew Weatherall, Alex Knight and Rick Hopkins spin alongside special guests Rub-A-Dub, from Paisley, Glasgow Mondays, Blue Note, 6 December, 10pm-5am, £8-£5, 0171 729 8440

Christ On A Bike New night for leftfield Electronica, with a live outing by Techno terrorists Snappy Sad (Scanner/Paul Thomas) London

Osgraceland, 196 Essex Road, N1, 18 December, 8pm-1am, £2, 0171 354 3369

Disobey The Xmas party all acts to be confirmed, but come on feel the noise anyway London Upstairs at the Garage, 19 December, 8pm-1am, £6, 0171 607 1818

Electronic Lounge Robin Rimbaud's scene features a DAT set by Warp's electronic wunderkind, Simon Pyke aka Freeform London ICA, 3 December, 9pm-1am, £2.50-£2, 0171 498 3032

PM Scientists The nation's finest drum 'n' bass DJs drop some science at this small but intimate space December guests: Darren Emerson (4), Andy C (11), Fabio & Grooverider at Peshay's birthday party (18) London Smithfields, Wednesdays, 10pm-2 30am, £4-£3, 0171 236 8112

Rumpus Room Excellent open-minded isothering chamber, now back and proud, featuring Luke Vibert (1 December), Environmental Science (8), Szavay (15), and Xmas bash with DJs (24) (21), on all nights, the Rumpus crew with their blunted-to-breakfast mix London Albany, Sundays, 7pm-midnight, £3-£2, 0171 388 0588

Scratch Skronk-rock grooves from Moonshrike, DJ set from Memeister Morris, plus hot vinyl from regular Scratch DJs London Soth, 109 Commercial Street, E1, 18 December, 7pm-midnight, £6-£4, 0171 247 9747

Radio

National

RBC Radio 1

One In The Jungle Fridays 10pm-midnight Guest DJs provide four-hour long breakfast mix **John Peel** Saturdays 5-8pm, Sundays 8-10pm The best place to keep up with new rock, indie, Techno, Jungle, Electronica, dub and the legendary sessions

Awes Nightingale Saturdays 2-4am Chilled-out electronic sounds for the after-cold set **Andy Burrell** Sundays 12pm-12am World Music from all quarters, folk, roots, reggae and more

RBC Radio 3

Phong & Monks 10.45-11.30am Robert Sandall & Mark Russell present their weekly pan-styletastic feast. In session the month: Fred Frith (9 December) and Shirley Hirsch (30)

New And Now Fridays 10-12pm Contemporary music magazine: interviews, record reviews, sessions Featured the month: Stockhausen's *Helios* (6 December) and Linn (13), both recorded live at Huddersfield Festival Christmas special from Embury's with Ambient Improv Types Green Room (20), Lantana perform *Bleed* 20th century choral music (27)

Impressions Alternate Saturdays 10.45pm-1am Modern jazzers in interview and on record

Regional

RBC Derby

Soundscapes Sundays 3-5pm Ashley Franklin plays instrumental Electronica contemporary ravesystems music, New Age and Ambient

RBC Greater London Radio (GLR)

Charlie Gillett Sundays 7-9pm Black, roots, dub World Music, blues R&B and more

RBC Lancashire

On The Wire Saturdays 12-2am Anything goes in Steve Barker's seasoned New Music mix dub, experimental electronics, cut rock, free improv and more

RBC Manchester

The Late World Noise Fridays 12.30-2 30am Out rock, psychedelia Jungle avant-garde, warped Ambient and global peaks in the noc sequences

RBC (Gilton Keynes)

The Garden Of Evening Delights Fridays 7pm-2am Shere Quentin's blend of avant rock to electronic, ending with house soundtracks

RBC 106.8FM (London)

Butt Kick Wednesdays 7-9pm Latest drum 'n' bass spun by Kerry Ken and DJ Hype

Chiv It Up Wednesdays 2-4pm Specially recorded sessions and in-studio appearances

Intelligent Drum 'n' Bass Fridays 12-2am Free and Grooverider rise out the jams

Solid Steel Saturdays 3-5pm Phil-deck mashup from Coldcut and the Ninja crew

The Chill Out Zone Sundays 6-7pm Paul Thomas's experimental Ambient, dub and Electronica mix

Giles Peterson Sundays 8-11pm Eclectic immersions from 'your' past to Brazil and psychedelic soul

RBC 102 FM (Manchester)

Late High-Bass Soundtrack Wednesdays 10pm-2am Matt Thompson presents it, from Orbital to Tansie

Delectable Drum 'n' Bass Shows Mondays 8-10pm Matt Plant with XTC and Marcus

R&B State Fridays 8-10pm Something for the weekend from the western coast

Alpha Waves Saturdays 4-6pm Environments, exotica and isolationism with Stuart James

Boogier Sundays 4-6pm Electronica and beyond with Architects Sean Booth and Bob Brown

RBC (South London)

Sharp As A Needle Sundays 9-10pm 1-2am Alan Kennedy spins post-rock, dub, Electronica

Interplay Ambient, Hip-hop, plus live studio jams by Radar Bros (15) and Kemp Process Train (18)

The Sprawl No London date in December, but still time to mention the end of November session featuring a DAT set by Ultramarine, solo performance by Kaffe Matthews, Freeform/Bifonic installation, and DJ Si-curl@b London Cafe Internet, 22-24 Buckingham Palace Road, SW1, 28 November, 7-11pm, £3-£2.50 + 50p m'ship The Sprawl posse shift to Brighton for a second session by the sea, featuring Cristian Vogel, Mat Consume, Sprawl DJs, and Tim Dwyer performing his Koan software compositions, Brighton Cyber,

9-12 Middle Street, 5 December, 6-11pm, £3-£2.50, 0181 883 0972

23 Inigma Scottish Electronic weirdness with DJs Mark Broom (1 December) and The Orb's Alex Paterson (14), plus residents Aberdeen Exodus, alternate Saturdays, 10pm-2am, £3-£2, 01224 648639

Vent Hosting the Emissons Christmas Disco with Andrew Weatherall, OJs Carley and Alex Hamley, and new signings Turbulent Force live London George IV, 144 Breton Hill, SW2, 20 December, £6-£4, 0171 278 9802

Soundings terms for the January 97 issue should reach us by Friday 6 December

letters

Write to: Letters, The Wire, 45-46 Poland Street, London W1V 3DF,
or fax: 0171 287 4767, or e-mail: the_wire@ukonline.co.uk

Every letter published wins a FREE CD

Sharp comments

Re: Chris Sharp's review of David Toop's *Pink Noir* (The Wire 152). Can you hear me from so far up your own arse? Is there a contest in the office, a prize for most adjectives in a review? Is this a reprisal after that letter a few issues ago?

While I appreciate the illustrative qualities of this kind of description, especially in relation to music as elusive and unquantifiable as Toop's (and that of his peers), something a little more down to earth would be more useful if I'm to judge whether the disc is worth forking out \$15 for, one of the major functions of reviews and review sections. Luckily, I've got an excellent freebie with this issue, with a Toop track on. But other artists might not be as fortunate. Temperance and moderation, please.

Matthew McKinnon London

Collective unconscious

I happened to glance at someone sending e-mail concerning The Hyster Trio the other day and naturally this led to a long conversation and an exchange of tapes and ideas.

In the past two years this is the third person I have met with similar ecstatic tastes in music. Strangely enough, as soon as I mentioned the fact that I had a recent letter published in *The Wire*, my latest acquaintance immediately knew my name and address and could quote bits of the letter.

Apart from our tastes in music we are all musicians and avid *Wire* readers. How much of our musical opinions and collections are shaped by *The Wire* is open to debate, but this little anecdote should serve to illustrate that you are doing something right and that you have found that niche in the market for bedroom boffins, who are not content to be spoon-fed by a media that is convinced aiming for the lowest level of intelligence is a sure winner.

Hugh Beattie Clydebank

Mekons divided

I never attended public school. Perhaps, if I had, I would have been spared my 16 and a half years as a hardworking fucked-over storeman for Welsh Water. I have been to Leeds maybe five times in my life. I am one of the "others" who contributed to the Mekons Underbook-and-CD I was appalled at the self-serving, personal spinning which constituted 30 per cent of Ben Watson's review (Print Run, The Wire 153). A mere two of The Mekons were, to echo Watson's curiously quaint

phrase, "walled up from Sevenoaks Public School". Should his SWP-fuelled inverted snobbery lead to all 30-line contributors being tarred with the same brush?

The line about 'the fantasy that a few magazines' most 'commodificators' make you a revolutionary Marxist' is a bit rich coming from one whose most famous work was an expensive 'Marxist critique' of Frank Zappa that was more thinly-disguised fan-worship (and who justified its hefty price saying, 'Zappa fans buy everything').

I know I have a small axe to grind, what with being in the book and all, but I am also a *Wire* subscriber and feel you have a duty to shield your readership from pot-calling-kettle-black personal attacks disguised as objective criticism.

Carlton B Morgan Newport

Fahey fête

It was with great delight that I picked up my copy and turned to the 'Guitar Summit' feature (The Wire 152) where Jim O'Rourke met John Fahey, one of my many musical heroes. It's great to see that the likes of Fahey and Derek Bailey are proving to be influential on younger musicians.

I obtained a copy of his *I Remember Blind Joe Death* about ten years ago and was impressed with what I heard. So impressed, in fact, that I wrote a short horror story (as yet unpublished) entitled *Blind Joe*, which was partially inspired by Fahey's bizarre sleeve notes.

Since then, I have acquired various Fahey albums at record fairs, and the purchase last year of the two CD retrospective *Return Of The Repressed* was a real revelation. I particularly like the eclecticism of Fahey's music, the way it fits from blues themes to the likes of classical, Country, ragas and Hawaiian styles. For me, he is up there with other American guitar masters such as Bill Frisell and Ry Cooder. Let's hope that the release of his new album sparks off a resurgence of interest in his music.

Mark Pittie Aberdeen

Captains of industry

I know nothing about Throbbing Gristle other than by name (which, by the way, I find silly) — never having felt particularly motivated to investigate their music. Perhaps their 'Industrial' roots and the images associated and conveyed by this movement put me off, the likes of Ministry and Nine Inch Nails, both of which I listened to not too long ago thinking them the height of subversion (grinace), with their painfully limited and limiting musical vocabulary, have definitely set me

agant Industrial music.

And yet I feel I must thank you for that bit of history: Industrial Revolution (The Wire 152). It's always rewarding when you infuse history with a sense of perspective, as you have done in the past with articles on Amn Dujil II and Faust. It seems to me you sometimes focus rather exclusively on recent productions and musicians (Re 150+ Musical Objects Of Desire features) to the detriment of the past.

Behind every 'hip' new artist there exists centuries of great music. Maybe you should add a new feature dealing with and tackling the past. You could also draw up a discography of their essential, most interesting releases — a thing you failed to do with Throbbing Gristle.

Flyntrog Calico, Chile

Prostate trouble

Congratulations on your magazine, overall it is a lot of fun. It makes a pleasant change from the usual Weezer, Tool, Bush, Pulp, MTV rawk the New Zealand music press throws up.

Since you've done retrospectives on Krautrock, Electro, New York out rock, why not do a big feature on HipHop heroes? Which reminds me: why do you bang on about albino bores like Eno? Is he some sort of 'older man's' thing like prostate cancer?

Minor gripes aside, an excellent magazine.

Martin Osborne Wellington, New Zealand


So now you know

Hello. Just finished the new issue (153) and was floored/enlightened/humbled as usual. One small error in the reviews section: What you listed as the Space Strelokings LP is actually a release by the band 'Shokuchichi Surprise', which is a collaborative effort between Japanese band Space Strelokings and Midwestern US band Mount Shasta (which wasn't mentioned in the review, both of which record for Chicago's Skin Graft label. The correct album title is Space Strelokings Over Mount Shasta).

Now back to nursing an ulcer over my own errors.

Aaron Burgess Cleveland, Ohio USA

Corrections Issue 152. As a surprising number of you have reminded us, we neglected to give a contact address to go with our Print Run review of Paco Peris's Spanish-language history of Ambient and experimental music, *La Modoguda Eterna: Artes Y Deputis Del Ambient*. Here it is: Futura Ediciones, SCCL, Gran Via, 602, 3º A, 08007 Barcelona, Spain.

out now on 

Cheikh Lô *Né La Thiass*

Produced by Youssou N'Dour

'Having brought us Radio Tarifa and Oumou Sangare, it looks like World Circuit have scored a hat trick of albums of the year with Cheikh Lô'.
Charlie Gillett, GLR

Q-Magazine

'Top 50 albums of the year'



WCD 848

Oumou Sangare *Worotan*

The Guardian

**** 'CD of the Week'



WCD 845

Radio Tarifa *Rumba Argelina*

WCD 846
'Top 50 albums of the week'



MEGASTORES

TOWER
RECORDS

MVC

HMV

icebreaker trance



MICHAEL GORDON



icebreaker perform this exciting new work from American composer Michael Gordon on November 28th, Quasn Elizabeth Hall, London.

'icebreaker have what it takes'
The Independent

'Heavy amplified rhythm and sax appeal... they boldly go beyond the cutting edge'

The Sunday Times

trance
icebreaker
CD 452 418-2

global ear

In this special edition of our monthly survey of sounds from around the planet, Robin Rimbaud, aka **Scanner**, keeps a diary of his recent tour through the sonic recesses of Australia's major cities



Addressing the need for the cultural production and consumption of new media and emerging artforms to occur within a critical context beyond the government and corporate driven technoevangelistic hype, The Australian Network for Art and Technology (ANAT) formulates the Virageness exchange project. Now read on

1 October Invited by ANAT to adopt the role of Agent Scanner and follow through an extensive national tour of Australia, I set off from London Heathrow at 0800 hours. One of the most valuable aspects of travelling is the opportunity to catch up with the archaic analogue pursuit of reading, so the choice of material is essential. I opt for *The Inceptors Of Max Neuhaus*, a collection of essays and interviews with the American artist whose sound work investigates the hidden potentials of acoustic data, and which seemed apt for a 26 hour journey on a plane, with only the air conditioning and engine hum as background music. Predictably, I was seduced by the in-flight film show and read barely a page. Saw Marianne Faithfull in the lounge wearing sunglasses and encased in black clothes. Prepared for the sunshine obviously.

3 October Sydney. My schedule began with an interview on Triple J radio, part of the ABC network broadcasting across the country. With minimal

distribution for my work here, and the scarcity of supportive independent media, it meant that each interview revolved around mundane biographical information and Music Biz Gossip, in which I was sadly lacking. I was shocked to discover that swearing was permitted openly on the airwaves. The Sex Pistols were in town, and during a news bulletin proclaimed, "We're gonna put wit'cha fucking minds, kids." This bit of wrinkled provocation was beautifully balanced by a later report that announced laconically, "The Sex Pistols will be appearing in Sydney this evening. The concert has not sold out."

4 October Live show at Lync in association with Zonar Recordings and EAR. Zonar is a label operating from Sydney, run by Brendan Palmer. An affable, enthusiastic character, Palmer founded the Clan Analogue collective in 1992, and though no longer part of their project, he instigated a resurgence in electronic music in a country seemingly sedated by the corporate pill of rock 'n' roll. Now curating EAR, a progressive, exploratory sound club in the heart of Sydney, he was one of many artists I met whose commitment and passion for boundary-less acoustic information was unbeatable.

Jet Lag began to kick in around 2100, the time the doors opened. A body thoroughly confused by the hour and day dragged itself out of its soporific state and balanced delicately on a table to watch the support acts: the dub-focused groove fanatics Alone, the abstractly post-industrial Flux, and the witty, video-hop, minimal rhythms of Size, a duo comprising contemporary video artist Jason Gee and Garry Bradbury, a former key member of Australia's most renowned electronic group Severed Heads. Djs Buddy Love and Zeitgeist threw in filtered Acidic abstraction between the acts.

My "sonic renaissance, media junkie" set (as the media liked to present my work) played to a mostly seated

audience. The ether-talk taught us that Sydney suffers equally from machismo males pumping their chests to impress the girls, at least, that is, when they are talking to them on mobile phones, and my body miraculously managed to remain upright throughout the show with only the aid of some sugary drinks.

5 October Delivered the first of my 'lectures' at Artspace in Woolloomooloo, alongside Agent Fuller whose text focused on the power relations of convergent technologies, and the emerging artforms of the third millennium. I presented a low-key summary of my ideas, focusing on the nature of Sound Polaroids — snapshot recordings of specific moments, spaces, actions — and Mapping The City with sound images. Placing my work ironically in the field of Calibrated Flux, and with an audience comprised equally of visual artists, students, musicians and voyeurs, it was important that a session like this should pose as many questions as answers. Appropriately, a machine gun series of encores followed through and I left with my head buzzing and pockets full of business cards and demo tapes.

6 October Met up with John Potts — a sound artist. The opportunities to present sound work publicly that refuses to deal with traditional parameters of verse/chorus, melody and so on seem to be much healthier here than in the UK, thanks in part to initiatives like *The Listening Room* and *Radio Eye*, two key public radio shows that broadcast nationally entirely experimental pieces of sound work. On tonight's *Radio Eye*, Potts' "Times Of Day And Night" played around with notions of time and space, using recordings of brain waves and the drama of REM sleep splintering out notions of memory, fantasy, nightmares. Time freezes and thoughts fracture as sounds whirl I improvised a ten minute live piece direct to air, a brave moment for both radio and myself, which was followed by recordings from a graveyard of the voices of the (un)dead that recalled the experimental recordings of



Raudive and the Spincorn. More decomposition than composition.

7 October Conducted an interview on top of the block of flats where one of the Clan Analogue collective lives. A perfect sight-line across the rooftops of Sydney, a moment captured out of a Robert Altman movie. Listened to the Clan's *Jauri* compilation which spins across the genres, textually following Trilokesh and darker digital experiments, reflecting the diverse personnel of the group. DJs, visual artists, coders,

and information, establishing networks and human hyperlinks, and challenging existing preconceptions of what constitutes "art" in the information age.

Some tough questioning from the floor. "So, if Ambient music is so popular, why have I never heard of it?" Played a live set to a funky young audience in the cafe at Perth Institute of Contemporary Art. Just before I slid onto the stage I was passed a demo cassette and when I came off I was greeted with an enquiring face. "Well, did you like the tape then?"

brought with me, I was still cold and suffered from that perennial problem — a running nose during a live show. Does one attempt to ignore it and constantly sniff, or apply a handkerchief between tracks?

A live bluesgrass band, a C&W singer and a transvestite cabaret built the audience perfectly for my own live set, but by the time I appeared on stage only the truly dedicated remained — or else they were frozen solid to their plastic chairs.

28 October The Lounge. A small club in Melbourne



writers and so on.

Met with the editors of *Essays In Sound*, a journal of sound art and theory. Available as both analogue — a physical publication — and digital — a Website adaptation — *ES* attempts to engage in the critical investigation of sound. With recent essays entitled "Erotic Nostalgia And The Inscription Of Desire", "Before The Beep: A Short History Of Voice Mail" and "Nothing Here But The Recording: Gemma And Phonography", this is one of the finest collections I have found that explores sound in its historical, technological and philosophical terrains.

9 October Canberra. The city, I am told, where all Australian pornography is produced, the only city where fireworks are legally on sale, and (does this come as a surprise?) where all the politicians reside. Booked in to give a talk to the Photomedia Lab at the local university. I delivered my text to a packed auditorium of would-be Politically Aware Erotic Saboteurs. When I switched all the lights out during the sound part of the presentation voices could be heard murmuring about 'ab's workouts'. Discussed the relationship between disciplines of visual art and sound, digital manifestation of technology, and the manner in which photography engendered vast changes in our perception of history, time, and of ourselves.

Sneaked into a student performance of *Faust* only to nearly lose my life by standing too close to a bicycle wired to a box of gunpowder — a moment of terror and humour as I dived to the ground to shield my body from a gigantic spinning wheel of flames.

11 October Perth. At the airport I walked through a large group of screaming teenage girls and boys, their attention focused on the Tanned Surfer Dude strutting out behind me. How disappointing.

12 October Delivered my talk to an attentive audience pressed into a gallery of the public library. Focused on the value of dialogue, disseminating ideas

14 October Melbourne. Found myself being filmed by a student as I used a public telephone and ended up discussing the nature of Public Space and Private Space. I was startled by the sound of the tram lines, the ripple of electricity as it shot along the line, the vibrations so unpredictable, reminding me of the sound in Brothers Quay films and Australian sound artist Allan Lamb's wonderful *Primal Image* CD, recordings of wind howling through outback cables.

16 October McClelland Art Gallery in the suburbs of Melbourne. Delivered a talk to 35 people who had braved storms and hail to attend this modest little presentation. I was surprised to answer questions on nostalgia, lounge music, "What is a sampler?", "What is a DAT tape?" and, most memorably, "Where did you get your boots?" One must not forget that assumptions cannot be made of your audience, no matter when or where you are.

18 October Melbourne Festival was on, so I checked out the current exhibitions. Bill Henson creates enormous photographic prints of young naked teenagers and car crashes and then physically tears into the images. Barbara Kruger assaults the passive consumer with images stolen from advertising and pastes exploded images directly onto the walls of the gallery space, using collage and speech/crowd soundtrack at high volume.

18 October Fringe Finale party at Station Pier, Melbourne. Despite the seasonably hot weather this was an exceptionally cold night, so much so that it apparently snowed in the halls. Wearing every layer of clothing I had

central. I arrive as the Rude Literature night is winding down. It's a contest to discover the city's most crude performance poets. I played a live mix set, scanning in voices over the beats, opening with Culture's parody of Michael Jackson which had the audience relatively confused and amused in equal measure. During the close of my set, as the beats cut and paste at an ever increasing pace, I turned to see a thumbs-up from the members of Skunk Anansie, in the audience, fresh from supporting The Sex Pistols earlier that night. At 0300 my body retired to bed.

22 October 0530 Return to London. Masses of brown envelopes to waste through, phone calls and e-mails. The pleasure of one's own bed and bath. ☐ Zoner Recordings. nadnerb@psyx.apana.org.au See geel@psyx.apana.org.au. Clan Analogue. clantay@psyx.apana.org.au. *Essays in Sound* http://psyx.apana.org.au/sound/teletext/essays_in_sound/



bites

Cujo

31st century schizoid beats

Amor Tobin doesn't know what's hit him. A little over a year ago, his college careers adviser was trying to dissuade him from jacking in his photography degree and "running away to join a rock 'n' roll band." She said, "It's just not on," remembers Amor, who meanwhile has released an EP and album as Cujo on Ninebar Records, a second EP under his own name on Ninja Tune, and is frantically finishing off a full-length release for the label.

"I'm astounded!" says the softly spoken Amor, barely audible above the builders' noise as we sit among the chaos of Ninebar's unfinished new studio complex near London Bridge. "I can't believe I'm doing this. And the greatest thing is not having to compromise to any extent. People are saying, 'We like what you're doing, do what you want.' I always thought it would be different, though people might pick up on some ideas you've got and ask you to come round to their way of thinking."

The Cujo LP is called *Adventures In Foam*. The title seems to connect with the way Tobin surfs a sea of jazz and sleazy funk, searching for its highest peaks, riding stolen slivers of sax solos and Blakey breaks until he's beached in a tumble of froth. Actually it dates from his time at college: "I did a photography project called 'Adventures In Foam,'" he says. "I did a lot of sculptures of shaving foam, and I lit them in various different ways and then took pictures of them. I scanned them in, and Photoshopped them. That was the best thing that ever happened, for a while. It was like having a sampler, really."

Some of these photos appear, naturally, as part of the album artwork. *Foam* happens to be one of the best recent examples of a kind of record that's multiplying fast: beathead inquirers sampling the ass off the century. Amor has spent the last 12 months with his head deep in the Ninebar record shelves, listening to Duke Ellington, Ray Sharkey and Bernard Purdy. On "The Method," he creates a window in a walking bebop riff into which he boots up first an extended funk drum solo, then a beatbox: a far more eloquent reality check than Mo' Wax achieved on their recent "Jazz Mix" of Carl Craig's "Bug In The Bassbin." In standout moments such as these, Tobin plucks transcendent jazz instants right off the records and recycles them into coiling bursts of beat-driven energy.

"The greatest thing is [that] the technology at the moment lets you do things that weren't possible before. Someone said a while ago 'You can't beat a live drummer.' I thought: Well, you can, I think that's the whole point. That's what I love about the upbeat drum



'n' bass — it's doing stuff that couldn't be done, because it can do all these tricks. I love surprises."

Currently resident in Brighton, Tobin's lived in a multitude of locations in South America and Portugal as well as within the UK, so it's natural that his music should contain such restlessness. "I came from Brazil to here, when I arrived, breakdancing was freaking out, it was massive, and I got really into that, and of course all the sounds that went with that, HipHop. That was my first true love, I suppose. And jazz. It's really ahead of its time, really flexible."

In this sense, the interconnectedness of jazz musicians, forming brief and whirling formations of groups, nexuses, combinations, is a trenchant model for today's electronic network. Next up on Ninebar is an EP of collaborations with Funky Porcini, Psyche (aka Paul Thomas) and Lee Curtis of The Flavaughts. "When the people become less important than the music," says Amor, "I think it's healthy as hell." **ROB YOUNG**
Adventures In Foam and the "Collaborations" EP are out now on Ninebar (through RTHMUSIC), the "Creatures" EP is out on Ninja Tune (through Vito).

Kaffe Matthews

No mean fiddler

Kaffe Matthews has been taking tea with several elderly people in the northern seaside resort of Bridlington. The excuse was her research for an installation piece in the Sewerby Hall Museum, but you get the impression that Kaffe relished meeting Olive Smees, Nora and Arthur Durham and the rest. "I built up a tape piece from a recording made at a tea dance. They were playing lush waltzes over a bad PA in a hall with an enormous reverb. Someone introduces the next dance, then everybody stands up, and you get this fantastic sound of feet shuffling onto the dance floor, the sound of a lot of people suddenly present in one room."

Alongside the museum installation, Matthews also played live violin in a chill-out room full of sofas, while Olive handed out cakes to the audience. Upstairs she devised music for a large room with a 'dance floor' entirely coated in white cake icing. "We gave the audience bags of picking which they could squirt around and decorate things."

The violin music that Matthews produces for her installations and live shows is a far less sweet affair, a world away from tea dances. Using a computerised sound processing set-up, she can



PHOTO: GEMMA FURNESS

sample and treat her live playing in real time, and the results show an extraordinary range of improvisatory imagination. Starting by stacking up violin apeggios as if in a Steve Reich piece, she suddenly shifts into a dense wall of distortion and extreme noise. This in turn settles into a kind of violinist's tropical rainforest, fragments flickering past like ungainly insects, which then opens out into a "dark Ambient" tundra landscape, devoid of all obvious violin sound and yet entirely created from live violin input.

With one foot in each of the converging camps of Electronics and Improv, Matthews played on David Toop's recent *Pink Noise* album, and in November appeared at London's Putzell Room alongside Bruce Gilbert and Susan Stenger in *The Brood*, as well as at the monthly electro-paradise *The Sprawl*. A regular fixture at LMC gigs, this month she contributes to two fringe multi-art events: *Rude Mechanic* and *Keep 3*.

"Within the last year I've made a major change in my technical set-up," she says, "and it's allowed me to start making music that I'm really excited about. Before, I was using the violin to trigger pre-recorded samples via a MIDI pick-up, but this was an absolute nightmare." The problems of adapting MIDI — a yes/no triggering system designed for keyboards — to the sensitivities of violin technique proved counter-productive. "You end up cramping your violin technique, and also spending hours pre-programming your machines with material that may turn out to be completely inappropriate once you're improving in public."

If a composer is someone who likes to take a lot of decisions before the performance, and an improviser

takes decisions during the show, then Matthews with her violin and computer is both composer and improviser. Her new system uses a Power Macintosh to run software called LISA ("Live Sampling"), developed by engineers at the STEM institute in Amsterdam. You sample into the software's memory as you go, and playback via MIDI. On the violin body there's a little switchpad with buttons, sending remote control messages to a MIDI controller box. So there are no pre-recorded samples, just violin sound being grabbed and processed in real-time.

Matthews caps off her live set-up by always setting up another microphone, maybe in a lobby or a bar somewhere near the concert, to provide a wild card element to sample. Recently she found herself playing in a concert hall in Warsaw, inside a castle. "The nearest bar was 300 metres down the road, so we ran cable all the way along to this bar, and I had my tiny mic in a vase on a table reserved for B 30pm — the same starting time as the concert."

The tension in Kaffie Matthews's performance is between the violin and the software. Brian Eno has pointed out that these days, before you can play or record music, you may have to invent your instrument. Matthews explains: "I need a physical contact with the instrument — I like the feel of a vibrating box under my chin, and the sensation of pulling her across gut strings. But when I set up the software, that's the instrument too, and I'm constantly modifying and redesigning it." **CLIVE BELL** For details of Kaffie Matthews's *Rude Mechanic* and *Keep 3* performances, see *Soundings*.



PHOTO: IRENE GARDNER

Ellery Eskelin

Jump-cut jazz head

In both his saxophone playing and composing alike, Ellery Eskelin somehow expresses a point of confluence between Arnold Schoenberg and Ben Webster. The Viennese *Klangfarben* specialist and the swing stylist were both master line-manipulators, able to combine wholly different textures, timbres, shapes and shades into coherent statements. Whether by means of a subtle embouchure shift or a bold new tone colour, emphasis is on nuance, the accretion of discrete, isolated sounds. But the real rub comes in the relationship of these microcosmic events to the macrocosm of musical form.

"The sheer shape of a piece, the effect that a form has on it — these are what most interested me," says Eskelin from his apartment in Manhattan. "Figuring out how to juxtapose phrases and ideas within phrases, to see what effect that could have on the overall music." A prominent player in America's post-jazz creative music community since releasing his debut *Standard* in 1988, Eskelin has worked as a member of Joant Venture (with demon trumpeter Paul Smoker), in

drummer Phil Haynes's *4 Horns & What?* and bassist Mark Helias's *Attack The Future*, and as a member of drummer Joey Baron's march-crazed *Baron Down*. The Baltimore-raised saxophonist's oeuvre includes *Forms*, a great release with the unlikely line-up of tuba and hand percussion, and his most recent album *The Sun Died*, featuring guitarist Marc Ribot, an idiosyncratic travel through tracks associated with the star-crossed Chicago soul-jazz organist Gene Ammons.

In 1992, Eskelin started accumulating material for solo tenor concerts, and it was in this context that his exploration of microcosmic juxtaposition crystallized. Taking the generally accepted organic fluidity of jazz sax as a departure gate, he began interrupting the flow, interposing unrelated ideas into the space of a single phrase. Eskelin's self-produced solo disc *Premontion* — which includes versions of "Body And Soul", "Off Minor", and "Besame Mucho" as well as his own pieces — came directly out of this investigation, and he was soon at work creating a group context in which to realise his arresting notion.

The trio that he settled on includes Andrea Parkins, playing accordion and sampler (using only samples of piano and organ, no "wacky" intertexts or distortions), and brilliant young drummer Jim Black, along with Eskelin's own highly refined tenor dialect. This group's first

album, 1995's *Jazz Trash*, effectively integrated Eskelin's solo concept into an ensemble, drawing together disparate sound worlds from contemporary classical to bebop to poststructuralism, without making obvious genre mix-match out of them. Instead, Eskelin rethinks instrumental roles, playing tandem melodies on equal terms with Black's percussion and Parkins's squeeze-box, then breaking for the imposition of a cool organ chord (Eskelin's mother is a professional Hammond organist, which could explain the Gene Ammons connection), then suddenly jumping back into an Archie Shepp-like sax statement.

"I didn't want to call so much attention to it, to make the juxtaposition the only thing," insists Eskelin. "I was interested in the fact that two or three ideas could be articulated and perceived as one." This interest in integration distinguishes Eskelin's from an orthodox postmodern jump-cut methodology like John Zorn's. "I guess one thing I have in common with that work is that I don't believe in hierarchies. I'm listening to lots of different music, and my influences come from widely different places. I don't think one is superior to the others." **JOHN CORBETT** The *Sun Died* is out now on *Soul Note* (through *Harmonia Mundi*). *Jazz Trash* is still available on *Sonolux*, Box 421, 810 W Broadway, Vancouver, BC Canada V5Z 4C.

Rude Mechanic

Pyrotechnic performance

David Crawford and Hayley Newman have winched themselves up to the ceiling in a builders' Powermicrider cage, and are setting light to birthday cake candles inserted into holes in their motorbike helmets, which they'd trepanned earlier with a power drill. As they mangle, waiting for an audience intervention which never happens, Newman realises that her helmet is melting and tries to fan out the flames with her hand. Next stop: casualty, to get her fingers bandaged. Performance art: don't try it at home, kids.

It's the launch night of Rude Mechanic, a month-long 'visualisation of sound' at South London's Beconsfield, an airspace within scan-shot of M5's temple-like fortress. Six hours a day, five days a week for four weeks, Crawford and Newman, together with Panasonic and a selection of mixers drawn from the fields of Electronica and experimental noise, are licensed to overturn the space, improvising actions, disturbances and feasts of physical and sonic endurance. Named after medieval 'rude mechanicals' (assistants at early surgical operations), the pair are aiming to dirty their hands in the creation of unexpected circumstances.

"We're very crude, loudish, and we'll be feeding Panasonic sound over that month," an unfluffed Hayley tells me the morning after. "There's a set routine every day, which includes sitting down to tea with Panasonic at 3.30, and one of us is going to swallow a microphone while we're drinking tea and having cake. Panasonic have got whoopee cushions, and we've got velcro," she adds, elliptically.

Newman trained as a singer at London's Guildhall, but the formality didn't agree with someone who claims that "visualisation of sound has been a total obsession of mine". Her best ideas are often the simplest, like her Microphone Skirt. Her aggressive body movements set a curtain of cheap mics swinging around her hips, the sound of their friction is amplified through the venue's sound system. "Those mics are specifically for the voice, they're cheap, handy mics that people use at home for making recordings, and it's about that displacement."

By the time you read this, there will have been live interruptions from Squarepusher, Jim Tenor, David Cunningham, Put Puz and Koss PH DJ Paul Thomas, but still to come are contributions from Simon Fisher Turner, Susan Stenger, Scanner, Bruce Gilbert, Katie Matthews and David Gilchrist: all naughty children rattling the bars



PHOTOS: BOB LABAREUS



of the music business playpen. Similarly, Newman and Crawford see their activities as happening in spite of the 'Britart' movement — Damien Hirst, Rachel Whiteread, et al — who, like it or not, have become household names over the last few years. "I'm quite relieved that's subsiding now," says Newman, "because that will let us get on without this shadow over us of something we haven't even chosen to be a part of. All the people working in performance in these areas have disented from the art market over the past few years. It's the same with the musicians: they've all disented from the industry, so that's another point where we meet."



Perhaps this is the kind of event which will allow the music's multi-form growths to flourish, and at the same time give impetus to an art scene currently receiving flak for its fixation on the spectacular at the expense of content.

"It's about being inspired, but coming from a lateral position," says Newman. "I can look at art, but when I listen to music it inspires me in a different way because

label lore

No. 008

Pork Recordings



Address: PO Box 18, Kingston-Upon-Hull HU1 3YU

UK distribution: Kudos/Pinnacle

Run by: David Brennan

Roster includes: Fila Brazillia, Heights Of Abraham, Bullinuts, Baby Mammoth, The Solid Doctor, Akotcha

Description: Downtempo beats and pieces

Brief history: Started in late 1990. Based around artists in Hull. A strict diet of haddock (not the bottom-feeding cod) has ensured an original Pork sound in the ensuing five years.

Statement of intent: To continue releasing records I love without having to resort to hackneyed corporate marketing ideas honed on 40 years of good old rock 'n' roll. The artists must be judged by their music, not haircuts, chart position, DJ accessibility or square footage of advertising space.

Other activities: Locally we do a free night at the Hull Adelphi (Born-midnight) once a month, and a monthly night at Room at the Bargain price of £2.50. Naturally I'm also investing big in sites.

Future plans: Four new 12"s from Baby Mammoth, Bullinuts, Fila Brazillia and a one off by Gerd. Also a new Baby Mammoth album in the new year. Fila Brazillia and Pork Sound System at Brighton Concord 1-4 December. Europe, North America and more Japan in the new year. Fila at Nippon Xmas party. Finally not to induce buyer remorse.

Choice cuts: Fila Brazillia — *Mam That Tune*, The Solid Doctor — *How About Some Ether* (info & manifesto: David Brennan aka Pork)

it's not my practice. It's the same for the music people: it's that lateral inspiration that goes in sideways rather than frontways. In this project I want to get away from creating that spectacle. We're looking for a solution to a problem."

With this in mind, the pair encourage interruptions from visitors, and have dedicated one whole day (5 December) as 'open access for Cubase freaks'. "That's it really — it's open access to come down and plug into Panasonic. And Panasonic will either mix them and feed them back into the space, or they may choose not to and keep doing their own stuff: they have total veto." The ganister is thrown down: come and get your fingers burnt.

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When I meet John Tye, above his studio in Old Spitalfields Market, both of us are still digesting a spate of double-decker CD compilations of hybrid musics. Kevin Martin's *Macro Dub Injection 2* is on the plate, even while both of us are still chewing our way through his *Jazz Satellites*, not to mention David Toop's colossal *Ocean Of Sound* sets infected dub, Electro-jazz, Ambient ecotica. Once artists have fled the decomposing corpses of their original genres, it seems that hybrids offer the heaven where they can pursue their impossible alterities.

The trilogy of compilations released on Tye's label, Lo Recordings, sounds like a three-step laboratory experiment to splice the genes of Electronica with breakbeats and the ghosts of free jazz and No Wave. 1995's *Extreme Possibilities* put together a roster including Omni Trio, Scanner, Boymerang and Daniel Pemberton. Then Collaborators brought an injection of alien strains from the likes of saxophonist Lol Coxhill, sound artist David Cunningham, and Pere Ubu's David Thomas. This month sees the release of *United Mutations*, a fantasy brood which includes a Luke

The compilations released on **Jon Tye's Lo Recordings** label provide a refuge for the disaffected citizens of the global electronic network. Interview by Matt Fytche

Viberti/Li composition as well as tracks by Tortoise, Thurston Moore, Spring Heel Jack and Mike Flowers Pops vs The Apex Twin

United Mutations is the compilation Tye originally set out to create, in the face of commercial disaster. "A couple of years ago it seemed that there was very little call for that sort of thing. You can't just stick guitar and electronic stuff on the same album. Now for some reason it seems to make sense." *Mutations* brings together a rich and innovative blend of new sonic directions: a never-world vortex of drum 'n' bass, feedback guitar, Loungecore, Ambient and freestyle noise sculpture. However, the compilation is not about defining a new hybrid niche market — it's more an attempt to put into practice, to validate, a new way of non-tribal listening: the kind of boundary-breaking, cross-genre sonic curiosity that is becoming more easy to demonstrate among artists and audiences alike. When Tye, whose role is perhaps best described as that of curator, handed Thurston Moore a copy of *Collaborators* he felt the need to explain — "you probably haven't heard of any of these" — and was surprised when Moore nodded his way approvingly through the line-up. "Oh, Paul Schütze, ahuh, Boymerang, ahuh." The false assumption was that experimental artists lived exclusively in their own worlds, rather than moving constantly through the conduits that connect the far-flung villages of New Music.

"Mutations" is not operating as part of a new cyberg lexicon here. If there is any philosophy behind Lo Recordings, it's just the empirical explorations of artists committed to transgressing their own boundaries. The most daring leaps don't seem to be forward into technoelectronic futures. Instead, what we find is a mass of sideways modulations, a mutual crossing of borders and explosion of musical dimensions. One artist's familiar sound-world can be another's terra incognita.

Listening to these compilations, it's difficult to define their boundaries or dynamic. Tye, who also works as one half of the Ambient duo MLO and in partnership with Daniel Pemberton in 2 Player, seems to have set out with the broadest aesthetic parameters — he likes

music that "flows" (which includes anything from Krautrock to Acid House, free jazz and noise guitar), that has an edge. The edges lie not around the compilations, but cross-cuts them internally. On one level, the records can connect works, personal as much as musical, that would otherwise remain mutually exclusive.

Close to hand is the gulf between Tye's own work as noise shaman Twisted Science, and an artist such as Luke Vibert who has appeared on all three compilations. "Luke works totally on his own, and has a very minimal amount of equipment — just a sampler, one little keyboard and an effects unit. He will sit up for 24 hours at a stretch working on the computer, and he says that when he gets into bed, the screen is actually burnt onto his retina." Tye admits that such techno-immersion would drive him up the wall.

Mock Industrial Noisebox, the forthcoming album from Twisted Science, is a series of desolate and sublime noise-scapes, veined with shutting, skiffing and pounding electronic velocities. You can still hear the influence of his apprenticeship playing in Pop Group-era post-punk bands. "I find the best music are the ones where you don't know what's going on." It's the sound of Electronica bleeding.

Because of the sideways hybridisation, the music on *Mutations* abounds with strange double-takes and trompe l'oreille effects where genres loop over each other in unexpected ways. *Extreme* electronic noise suddenly maps over Hendrix-style distortion, drum 'n' bass seemingly takes-off for 60s Loungecore. On one of the tracks by Sycophants, Tye thought he was listening to a bit of tortured saxophone — "actually it was this piece of metal being dragged through a hole in the door of the studio."

What are these tracks mutating into? There were no ground rules, no projected futures in Tye's approach. "When you put all the disparate pieces on one album," he remarks, "you don't know what it reflects until later. It's only now that I'm starting to listen to it and hear it as a whole." His favoured approach is for people to collaborate one-on-one in the studio without pre-programming the result. The best work often depends on a chance mutation, a line of flight from expectations. Regarding his own approach to production, Tye refers to Francis Bacon. "Often he'd finish a painting, and then he'd have to mess it up and throw some paint on it, sometimes he'd have to destroy it. He just felt that without that accident, it wasn't enough." ☐ *United Mutations* is distributed by RITMUSIC. MLO's *Plastic Apple* is out now on MLO's *Music Machine* (through MLO's Music).

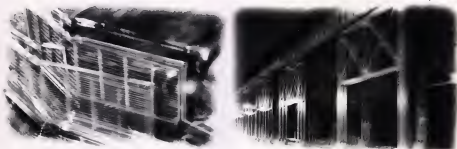


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Eric Drew Feldman was always interested in some kind of career in music. But while working as an unpaid studio hand in California during the mid-70s he would never have predicted that his future production work would be a sideline to six years in Captain Beefheart's Magic Band and spells with ex-Residents guitarist Snakefinger, Pere Ubu, Frank Black and PJ Harvey — the path of an avant-rock journeyman, in fact.

By the time his break came, he was already a longtime Beefheart fan. In 1968 the 12-year-old Feldman lived in California's San Fernando Valley. On a couple of occasions he'd ridden his bike over to the notorious house in Canoga Park where The Magic Band were then living and rehearsing *Strictly Personal* (and later where *Trout Mask Replica* was rehearsed and parts of it recorded) just to see what was going on. A few years later he introduced his school friend Morris Tepper to Beefheart's music, so he was admittedly "really envious" when Tepper joined the reformed Magic Band as guitarist in 1975, after a chance meeting with Beefheart in Northern California.

After the double-whammy debacle of *Unconditionally Guaranteed* and *Bluejeans And Moonbeams* in 1974, Beefheart was back on track again. After almost giving up music, he formed a new Magic Band which recorded the original (and still unreleased) *Bot Chon Puller*. But by 1976 Beefheart was looking for a replacement for the departing keyboard player John Thomas. Tepper recommended his friend for the job.

Feldman takes up the story: "We met in a coffee shop and Don [Van Vliet, aka Beefheart] said, 'Do you want to blow?' I thought there'll be some sort of audition or something, so I had been working really hard and trying to learn how to play some of these songs. He came over to my home a few days later and I was trying to play him stuff and he was not even paying attention. He was like, 'Yeah, fine' — he just kind of decides instinctively."

Feldman was accomplished on keyboards, but bass wasn't an instrument that he'd much experience of. With hindsight he reckons that was an advantage. "In one sense any lack of expertise you have is a benefit for playing with him. In as much as I appreciated what he did, it took a while to wash some of the technique or musician's ego out of my hair."

the sideman's saga

Feldman learned the parts from the original *Bot Chon Puller* together with new material intended for a revamped version of the album, which was subsequently released in 1980 as *Shiny Beast*. On the follow-up, *Doc At The Radar Station*, Feldman was more fully immersed in Beefheart's idiosyncratic way of generating musical material: spontaneous composition at drums or keyboards, whistling lines or playing them on the harmonica. Beefheart himself would have been hard pressed to repeat them, but once they came into existence, the parts were to be played exactly as composed — or until Beefheart himself decided to change them.

"He was the most strict person in that way," explains Feldman. "It would be an insult to him to do otherwise. I never had a problem with that. I felt like I was getting parts dictated to me from one of the best, especially when they were designed for me. You just feel like a model in a fashion show wearing a really nice dress, I guess."

Knowing when they were going to be composed was another matter. Group members had to be on standby with a note pad to document a sudden outpouring of Beefheart poetry, or have a tape recorder at the ready to catch a fleeting musical cue. Feldman recalls the time when Beefheart was visiting him at his house and came up with some lines for "Sue Egypt" (subsequently included on *Doc At The Radar Station*).

"It was actually written on this organ in my living room. All the time around Don, if

Eric Drew Feldman is the quintessential avant-rock journeyman, abandoning his own music in favour of intense periods working with Captain Beefheart, The Residents, Pere Ubu, Frank Black and PJ Harvey. Mike Barnes hears his story



he's doing something you put a little tape recorder on and record what he's doing. He started playing that music and the cat was just dancing wildly around the room, so for a long time we referred to it as "The music that made the cat go crazy." And as you tend to do with his music on things like that I just transcribed what he played as exactly as I could."

Feldman recalls that although Beethoven could recite any of his lengthy poems or lyrics to order, he would get so distracted on stage that he needed cue cards to remember which lyrics he was supposed to be delivering. Feldman speculates that it

was no 'next one.' Crow was to be Beethoven's last recording. The break from Beethoven dictated gave Feldman the chance for greater self-expression. His new found freedom also came with a restlessness that's with him to this day.

"Some things happen, things change and you move on and since then part of me has never ever wanted to be in one place for too long," he says tellingly. He continued playing bass and keyboards with Snakefinger, producing the album *Night Of Desirable Objects* in 1986. "That was when I was first interested in pushing my ego a little bit and trying to hear things that I wanted," he says. But the association ended tragically



was due to some form of nervousness or the effect of his constant throughput of ideas. He gives one particularly nightmarish example.

"One night I was playing this song on stage, one that was very difficult for me to play — I don't even remember what it was — and I'm in the middle of doing it and it's very loud up there. [Beethoven] comes up to me and starts yelling this stuff in my ear, a title and the first couple of lines of some song he was thinking of, saying, 'You gotta remember this, it's going to be worth a lot of money to you and a lot of money to me.' Two hours later when we were back in the dressing room, I didn't even remember it — much less what he said, but him even saying it. And he comes back to me with his book and says [sternly], 'OK.' Still to this day he'll say, 'So what was that?' He's a really funny guy," he adds, somewhat unnecessarily.

Feldman agrees that the ego-sublimation needed to be the "pant" in Beethoven's palette wasn't easy. Beethoven has irrevocably given up music now, but in common with the other, latter-day Magic Band members, he says that if the call came he'd "be there for him." Feldman effectively left just before the recording of the last Magic Band album, *Ice Cream For Crow*.

In a period of inactivity he had moved to San Francisco and had been hanging out with the Residents.

"I was starting to have ambitions by then. I wanted to produce things and had co-produced a record [*Manual Of Errors*] with their guitarist Philip Lithman, aka Snakefinger, and agreed to do some live shows."

Coincidentally, after numerous delays, Beethoven was getting ready to record *Crow* and gave Feldman an ultimatum — the recording couldn't be delayed any more. But Feldman, feeling "caught and stubborn" as he says, opted to do the tour with Snakefinger. Beethoven said, "It's cool, do the next one," but was surprised — and none too happy — when Feldman actually did jump ship. He returned in time to play on one track, "The Thousandth And Tenth Day Of The Human Totem Pole," but there

with Lithman's death in 1987.

"I was on a tour and then he died of a heart attack. I found him next day and I decided, this isn't on, I don't think I want to do this anymore."

In late 1988 a call came from Pere Ubu enquiring about Feldman's availability for work, which coaxed him back into the fray.

"I remember they called up and said they were going to send me some stuff. I walked down to a store where they had a lot of magazines and Pere Ubu was on the cover of a couple of them. I looked at them and I went, yeah, I could stand next to those guys and I wouldn't look too much like I didn't belong. They were such a motley crew of people and that made me feel a little better about it. I'd just started feeling for a while that my thighs were too large standing next to a lot of other people in band pictures."

Feldman reckons the group didn't really know much about him and he was drafted in principally as a replacement for departing synth player Allen Ravenspine, but he

wasn't asked to replicate Ravenspine's action painting-style sonic scribbles. He spent three years with the group around the turn of the decade, playing on the *Worlds In Collision* album and some B-sides.

"I went to Cleveland Ohio where they originally came from," he recalls. "We started to jam and write songs in a room and I'd never really worked with anybody quite like that and it was in a certain way a very democratic thing. All ideas were thrown together, mushed up, and it didn't feel compromised — it just felt like a wonderful kind of a mess. They were just very encouraging, especially David Thomas 'loosen up, do more, do more'."

"It was great to do that for a while but at some point I was actually asked to join the group and was honoured and I liked being part of this sort of organisation again, but then really quickly found out once I was in yet another band I really shouldn't do that

“Beethoven started playing that music and the cat was just dancing wildly around the room. For a long time we referred to it as: The music that made the cat go crazy”

any more. I've got to be careful about jumping into relationships, as you learn in various other parts of your life.

"I felt a little restricted by it because I'd been in so many bands that try really hard and care about and like what they do and it goes down in flames in a really slow way — I was not really up for that. Once the honeymoon was up I just felt a little funny in the middle of working one night. It was that feeling: 'hmm, it feels like an uphill battle'."

In 1991 Pere Ubu were on tour opening for The Pixies. At one soundcheck, Feldman explains, "this kid came up and introduced himself to me, his name was Charlie" (Charles Thompson, aka Black Francis, now Frank Black). Feldman kept in touch and in the perennial way he seems to have fallen from one job into another, he

ended up playing keyboards with both The Pixies and Pere Ubu on the next tour. Drawn to Black's elliptical songwriting, he began collaborating on a solo project that would become the album *Frank Black*.

"He's got a pretty strong voice in his own way," Feldman suggests. "I go in and out of being interested in things like that but he's got a kind of detached way of writing songs that's interesting — very third person, even from himself. It suited a state of mind that I was definitely interested in working with. He was just completely 'Whatever you want to do' and he was still working with his band then. I ended up playing on their last album (*Trompe Le Monde*) and toured with them for a while."

This preoccupied a split with Ubu. "We did a tour together where I was playing in both bands. In The Pixies I was truly by the books the side-person. I didn't really feel part of that; I'd never done anything like that before, but I was really grateful for that experience. In one way the music I was doing had been getting more and more obtuse and complicated and there was something about The Pixies that was so direct and primitive. Once again, every ten years or so everything you think you know you throw out of the window and start over again. I've done that several times, you just kind of reinvent yourself."

The Pixies split in 1992 and Feldman came on his association with Frank Black, making a vital contribution on bass, 'synthetics', keyboards and melodion to the dazzling, at times barely listenable 1994 *Teenager Of The Year* album.

"Basically he didn't really understand or care about a lot of my references that I liked in the past. *Teenager Of The Year* seemed to baffle a lot of people. There's a whole lot of songs on it [22] — we recorded even more than that. We recorded it really fast again — most of the songs in about four or five days — and it really felt like *Trout Mask* to me in that they all had the same kind of tone or a sound and lyrics about all these various different things. It didn't have that certain pop thing that was required by people, but thankfully it didn't end my career or his completely, so it was all right."

Following Feldman's introduction, Morris Tepper played a few cassettes on the first two Frank Black albums. In 1993 Tepper had introduced Feldman to PJ Harvey in a more indirect way. "One day Tepper said, 'Oh, you should hear this' and put on this PJ Harvey record of *Four Track Demos*. We were just like sitting around and enjoying it and enjoying an occasional pop or something, and there were all these very overt Beefheart-type of references in her lyrics and stuff. It wasn't offensive. A lot of times I hear that stuff and it sounds like a rip-off. This didn't feel like a rip-off at all. It felt honest and cut front and doing something different with it. I didn't really think twice about it but I liked it, I thought it was interesting, but I had no burning ambition to do it."

At the end of a 1994 tour, Black ended their working relationship, and although the

split was amicable and left open for future possibilities, Feldman was understandably smarting, wondering if he'd played again. That same night he met guitarist Joe Gore who had himself played with PJ Harvey and Tom Waits.

"He said, 'So how'd that go?' I said, 'Oh, great. I just got fired.' Kind of a joke, but and he said something to the effect that PJ Harvey was putting a band together and I thought, 'hmm, that's interesting'."

A fax to the management company and a short audition later and Feldman was part of the set-up. "We played together for like five minutes or something and she and the guy that co-produces with her a lot, the guitar player and drummer John Parish, just said, 'If you want to do it, we'd like to do it.' So I said 'OK.' That was pretty much it and we've been really good friends since."



Frank Black



Polly Harvey

The interview with Feldman took place in London in between live shows and radio sessions with PJ Harvey. He's now part of the fabric of the group and although he's been purely a live player so far, he's set to play on the upcoming PJ Harvey album. In conversation, Feldman's attitude towards his future seems — on the surface, at least — disarmingly casual.

"I just keep meeting people that I like what they're doing and it just feels as long as they're willing to have my assistance, I'm somewhat content to

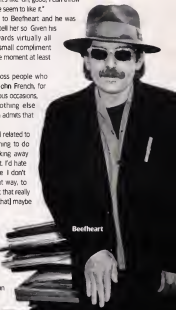
offer certain services as long as they're appreciated. Going and playing with Polly is like a vacation from responsibility. It's like, oh, good, I can throw a bass on, I can play this music and people seem to like it."

Some of PJ Harvey's music was sent to Beefheart and he was impressed, even calling Polly Harvey to tell her so. Given his well-documented lack of charity towards virtually all contemporary musicians, this was no small compliment. And it neatly rounds off the story, for the moment at least.

Beefheart casts a long shadow across people who have worked with him. Drummer John French, for example, left The Magic Band on numerous occasions, only to rejoin, because musically nothing else measured up to the experience. Feldman admits that the shadow still falls across him, too.

"It's been very difficult for me because I related to it so much that it probably had something to do with my reluctance — which I'm breaking away from — to actually have my own project. I'd hate to do anything I'd think was second rate. I don't think I'm ambitious in an entertainment way, to have to lead a show — that's not the part that really interests me that much. I wish it did, or [had] maybe I'd change."

"I think I was subconsciously looking at these guys [in The Magic Band] when I was younger that I thought were great players, really interesting and fun to watch, and I never heard more about them. I was more ambitious than that — I wanted to do things. I didn't want to just be an asperser in a Guinness book — I wanted to be several aspersers!" □



Beefheart

While he's chatting to the owner of his local record store in London, Ontario, Chris Meloche often gets buttonholled by his fans. But it's not his face they recognise — it's his voice. Meloche presents *Wired For Sound*, a weekly radio show on the town's CRRW-FM, which for almost seven years has been turning the Canadian airwaves with some of the 20th-century's most vaporous music, from Stockhausen and Teiji Takemitsu through Anthony Braxton and John Dawald to Aom Heart and Jonah Sharp.

"Canada has always been good to its experimental musicians, and Meloche is one of many to have reaped its benefits. He earned his New Music colours in the early 80s with a group called M104, improving live soundtracks and churning out a series of cassette-only releases. His appetite for avant tracks of post-war New Music naturally led him into specialist radio, where he defends the filmparts against commercial radio's demands for maximised audience ratings, minimised quality control. "I put a lot of music out onto the airwaves which would never be touched by the majority of the broadcasters out there," he says. "I view each programme as a one-off aural adventure."

In 1993, Meloche sent some tapes over to Pete Namlook after playing some of his Fax label releases on air. Namlook liked what he heard, and put out *Recurring Dreams Of The Urban Myth* in 1994, followed by 1995's *Mythos*, before Fax's sporadic release schedule effectively ground production to a halt. In the last two Fax Fax, Meloche has issued a further two CDs, *Desant Rituals* and *Urban Myth 2*. Both continue a musical process he began with a "borderless" piece of radio art



hour progression." Even condensed onto CD, the fluid component noises — feedback whistles, traffic noise and power hums — looping in and out of phase like Steve Reich time-stretched towards infinity, are not easily digested in cosy suburban sitting. Indeed, since broadcast radio stations tend to be reluctant to turn chunks of their airtime over to longform process-works, he's turning to installation work to explore different, more democratic ways of delivering music to the audience.

"I have done installations involving the use of low-power stereo FM transmitters. The devices were hooked to auto-reverse tape machines and placed in a number of stores. People who were aware of the installation could come into the store with an FM Walkman and listen to the work. People who were not interested in the work would not be bothered by the music, as it was just playing over the PA system in the space."

Instead of a desperate pursuit of experiences, he's seeking more philanthropic means to extend the reach

Chris Meloche is an urban mythologist, electronic imagineer, acoustic ecologist — plus, he hosts the Canadian equivalent of *Mixing It*. Interview By Rob Young

of *difficult* music. He is a founder member of the World Forum for Acoustic Ecology, which took shape in 1993 at a meeting of artists at the Banff Centre in Alberta.

"People who are members of the organisation have different ideas about 'acoustic ecology' and different goals for belonging to it. Some are interested in preserving the natural soundscapes of the forests and wetlands to prevent the intrusion of man-made noise. Others focus on the sounds of the city and put together 'sound walks' in places such as Montreal and Vancouver." "Now that things are so simple, there is so much work to do," he writes in his sleeve notes to *Urban Myth 2*, quoting the composer Morton Feldman. Time will tell if Meloche's silent-running presence in the ocean of electronic sound contributes to any lasting change in the state of music, but he remains quietly confident. "What really counts in the long run is if there is a genuine and long-lasting effect gained from the direction I am more likely to be drawn towards someone whispering behind me as opposed to someone trying to gain my attention by shouting at me and hitting me over the head with a board." □ *Desant Rituals* is on *Silent (Stereosonic Comp)*, *Urban Myth 2* is on *Etherworld (pyramid/bwell.com)*. For the WFAE website, go to <http://interact.oregon.edu/Media/FGWFAEHomePage>

erated *LINK*, which had parallels with John Cage's 1951 radio piece *Imaginary Landscape #4*, and synthesized his interests in electronic composition and improvisation. "It was a piece which incorporated my long-time interest in international radio — in shortwave radio — as the main focus of a composition," he explains. "The basic idea was to present a live concert which had at its heart a shortwave radio, which was used to receive signals coming from around the world in real-time. As the event unfolded, it was up to me to make spontaneous decisions as to the tuning of the radio, specific tone sources and mixing." With no pre-recorded material, Meloche had to utilise whatever his receiver picked up on the night, which lent a certain frisson to the often grey world of electroacoustics. "This type of work is dangerous for many different reasons, not least of which is the quality of radio reception on the evening of the performance."

It's not easy to describe the sound of Meloche's music, especially since it's not best served by concentrated, uninterrupted attention. Echoing the buried origins of urban myths, individual sounds detach themselves from their source as they spin out through time. As he admits: "The long-duration pieces are definitely intended as sonic environments as opposed to something that one would pay strict attention to over the course of the ses-

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Combining the bass pressure of dub with radical mixology and obtuse 'electrotectural' theory, a new generation of New York musicians are redefining the sonic landscapes of the demented city. Peter Shapiro meets the guerrilla fighters of **Iilbient** and **Crooklyn dub**: the Wordsound collective, Sub Dub, We, the Liquid Sky consortium, Soundlab, Byzar, Bill Laswell, Ben Neill and Circuit Bible

the iilbient alliance

Miami might be the American city most people associate with the low rumble of a thundering bass bomb, but nowhere in the world outside of Kingston, Jamaica is the sound of the bass as important as it is in New York. Where the Miami Bass of 2 Live Crew and 69 Boyz is as synthetic and plastic as the tanned bodies that line the city's South Beach, the best musicians in New York belong to an experimental tradition of using the bass to reproduce the city's impossibly pressurized combustion. From the melodic kineticism of Jimmy Blanton's baseline on Duke Ellington's "Jack The Bear" to the sub-bass contractions of Davey DMX, EPMD and Public Enemy, the shift in bass aesthetics from fluidity to seismic menace mirrors New York's deterioration from optimistic melting pot to powder keg of paranoia. Now, a new generation of post-Hop New York musicians are playing with the sound, texture and physicality of the low end in order to approximate the phenomenal density of humans, objects and cultures in the Big Apple — what architect Rem Koolhaas calls "the Culture of Congestion".

Just as Koolhaas found a Utopia in the compression of Manhattan's grid, pan-slystic musicians and DJs like Byzar, We, Circuit Bible, Ben Neill and Cultural Alchemy dredge up metaphors for survival from New York's ominous underbelly, blur the distinctions between pulse and hum, party in a 'swarm of drones' and try to conduct the city's symphony of Brownian motion. Orbiting the same sphere, Bill Laswell, the Crooklyn Dub Consortium of the Wordsound label, Sub Dub, Badawi and the first generation American drum 'n' bass and TripHop of the Liquid Sky label toy with the notion of the bass as harbinger of illness or as a conduit for the disorientation of urban culture clash. As Neil Cooper, founder of America's dub flag-bearer ROIR Records, says, "I think it has a lot to do with living in an industrial, night community no sunshine, no trees, no water, no nature, people being pushed together."

With the exception of the music on Liquid Sky, which is more directly engaged with the UK's drum 'n' bass and downtempo scenes, this radically schizophrenic ordering of beats and pieces is much darker than its British or West Coast counterparts. Where drum 'n' bass expresses its dark side through either vocal or spoken word samples (Ron Size, DJ Hype) or through uncompromising bleakness (J Majik), this new school of New York bass communicates through wheezing, constriction and compression.

While dub, with its pressure cooker aesthetic and dirty timbres, is a perfect metaphor for the compression and pollution of New York, at the same time it is also where the bass and drums stretch out and breathe — a search for width in a city dominated by its skyscraping verticality. In Williamsburg, Brooklyn — a section of town that squashes Polish immigrants, Hasidic Jews and slumming hipsters into a deteriorating Hispanic neighbourhood across the East River from Manhattan's implausible spectacle of height — the core artists of the Wordsound label are exploring dub's double meaning of giddy

“Wordsound is not a record label, this is a guerrilla think tank. Most of the people involved in this clique have a militant mentality. Wordsound will always be the unseen.”

paranoia and horizontal space. Sitting in the post-industrial bunker that serves as the label's headquarters, wearing what he calls "end of the world wear", label boss Skiz Fernando says, "The bass and the drum are the foundation of music. Well, except Ambient, but that's mostly space. Dub combines the drum and bass with the space that's all you need to have a good time really."

"What people seem to like about the music is that it's experiential," adds Jeremy Dawson, the label's graphic designer and Skiz's partner in the excellent Roots Control. "You can really feel the bass. There's nothing you can feel more than the bass. It takes you on a trip, takes your whole body there." Bass is the most interior of musical sounds (especially on a big system) and its vibration through the body of the listener is the most primal musical experience there is. Making explicit the historical connections



Skiz Fernando (left) and members of the Wordsound collective

between HipHop and dub, Wordsound calls this elemental feeling "the illness"

"Our concept of the illness is a bit like funk," explains Fernando. "Back in the 60s funk was a four letter word that had nothing to do with music. It took James Brown to bring that into music. What he did was take a concept and totally flipped it. 'Not bad meaning bad, but bad meaning good' as Run-DMC said. The funk cannot be defined, it's rawness, earthiness, letting it hang loose. It's basically being human. We need more of the funk in this world today. With all the advances in technology by the week, we need that humanness in the world again. I think that's what the illness is about, too. It's taking something negative and making something positive out of it. Here we are living in post-industrial Brooklyn near the docks, the old navy yards. This used to be a thriving centre and now it's all decayed and lying in ruins. This is where we are coming from, we are rising from these ruins. We're using anything available to us in our wallet or in our minds to create something new, to create something from scratch. Our music is not slick, it's dirty and raw. You can tell it was made by a human being even though it was made with all this new technology. In this day and age it seems like the human is disappearing and we want to bring that back."

The intensity of the bass also makes a link between external pollution and internal

illness. Much of the music released on Wordsound — from Roots Control's ghost-town minimalism to Dr Israel's apocalyptic breakbeat prophecies to OHM's gem-ndden take on dub — is dark, brooding and constricted, despite its quest for breathing room. It feels paranoid, and, indeed, conspiracy theory is an obsession for the Wordsound crew. As Keith Benu, the man behind OHM, says, "[Conspiracy theory] is so obvious, it's not theory anymore, it's fact."

"This whole millennial madness, we're feeling it right now," says Fernando, "barcodes and all that good stuff! It's happening. You could look in the Bible in Revelations 13 and it says that no man should buy or sell without the mark. And then you go to try sell some records and your distributor tells you, 'Oh, we're not going to be able to take you on unless you get a barcode because certain stores won't be able to stock your product.' That's real, that happened."

All the Wordsound artists make references to the conspiracy theorists' Bible, William Cooper's *Behold A Pale Horse*, and *The Book of Revelations*, while Fernando talks about receiving "information" and documents distributed by HipHop artists DXT and Afrika Bambaataa. "Wordsound is not a record label," says Fernando. "This is a guerrilla think tank. Most of the people involved in this clique have a militant mentality. Ultimately, we want to destroy all the bullshit and the garbage and remake things. You know, build and destroy. That's why we've never really belonged to a scene or anything. We'll still be doing this stuff no matter what the music is, whether it's dub, ilibent, whatever you want to call it, Wordsound will always be the unseen."

"I don't like scenes, they scare me," says Raz Mesina, aka Bedoun, Badawi and, with John Ward, as one half of Sub Dub. "It's like a cult. It all has to do with people without heritage. They lack heritage, they lack tradition, they lack something in the family. They look to music as their heritage and then they make a religion out of it. We don't need any more religions."

Mesina, a Jew who spent a transgressive childhood hanging out with Palestinian

musicians in Israel and listening to instrumental HipHop, now makes dub sprinkled with Middle Eastern flavour. His touchstones are the Jamaican studio masters, Persian classical music, the Carnatic tradition of India and the keening keyboards of raï producer Sifi Boulella. But unlike the Fourth World mush of Transglobal Underground or Jah Wobble, Bedoun's fusion of darabouka rhythms and deep bass sounds as natural as King Tubby.

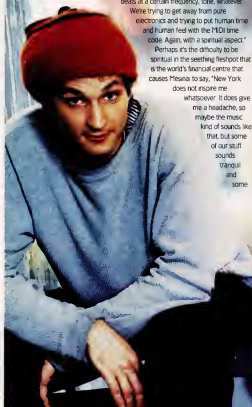
Sub Dub, on the other hand, make tracks explicitly for DJ use. Their first couple of 12"s were picked up by ilibent scenesters DJ Spooky (see *The Wire* 138) and DJ Olive. As a result, the duo have been associated with New York's peculiar take on the Ambient aesthetic. "I don't know what ilibent is, but to me it's DJ culture, it's experimental DJ," says Mesina, adding, "It's really nice to hear people alter your records." Ward defines it as "DJs who aren't restricted by beats per minute or formats, DJs who are into deconstruction and reconstruction."

Like the Wordsound crew, Sub Dub strive to coax a more human sound out of their wealth of sophisticated technology by concentrating on the fundamental sounds of the drum and the bass. "It's instinctively human," says Ward. "The drum and the bass, it's the heartbeat. It's an irreducible human. The sound is in a certain range, our heart-

beats at a certain frequency, tone, whatever. We're trying to get away from pure electronics and trying to put human time and human feel with the MIDI time code. Again, with a spiritual aspect."

Perhaps it's the difficulty to be spiritual in the seething fleshpot that is the world's financial centre that causes Mesina to say, "New York does not inspire me

whatsoever. It does give me a headache, so maybe the music kind of sounds like that, but some of our stuff sounds tranquil and some



We. Left to right: Loop, DJ Olive, Once11

of it sounds ill. But actually when we're trying to sound tranquil, it turns out sounding ill."

A week earlier, Mesina told me "Environments have a lot to do with sound. Living in New York, my music sounds a lot more rugged. There's a sense of humor in there which I think is important. Living in New York, you've got to have a sense of humor. New York is not really a tough place to live, but New Yorkers like to think it is. But there's something in the air. The pollution makes it sound so rugged."

With three EPs released on his own label, Serre Joubert, and tracks licensed to Liquid Sky, Ubiquity and the new Mo' Wax Heads compilation, DJ Wally is one of New York's premier experimental drum 'n' bass and TripHop, but with a very New York feel. "My downtempo stuff definitely has its own sound," he says. "The beats and the flavor are more New York. It's darker, heavier. People I'm really depressed when they listen to my stuff. No man, it's not like that. Sometimes there's stuff you don't show when you're around people."



but it comes across in your music."

In addition to making his own tracks, Wally is also one of the resident DJs at New York's premier drum 'n' bass night, Konkrete Jungle. "I won't play any of that Jumbent stuff anymore," says Wally. "I wanna move crowds." With a set consisting mostly of HipHop-sampling nastiness from the British Dope Dragon, Gaiya and Frontline labels, he manages to do just that. Wally spins along side DJ Soul Slinger, a charismatic Brazilian emigré who is the mainstay of the Liquid Sky label, record shop and clothing emporium. "We sample New York's vibrations," says Soul Slinger of the development of Jungle in the US. "We've been here for so long that we are a physical part of those vibrations which are House, HipHop, ragga. Those are the foundations of New York dance culture. Those favours are inside."

Soul Slinger also makes strangely brittle drum 'n' bass tracks like "Brasil" or "Happiness", with its Björk-in-a-blender vocals. Aside from the samba school rhythms

If Soul Slinger's music is about the blurred mass of information overload, then Bill Laswell's recent audio collages are trying to force the listener to navigate without a compass. Describing his ideal bass aesthetic, Laswell says, "If everyone stopped using these kinds of structures — tuning, pitch, rhythm, chords — it would be a good start. There are a lot of people in the business who need to make money, so they repeat the form, they can't afford to attack styles or genres. Their livelihood depends on repetition. Dub attacks songs, song form, it deconstructs structure. It gives another way of looking at things."

Fusing punk and jazz, Metal and funk, noise and Ambient into cohesive structures, Laswell has been at the forefront of the cut 'n' paste aesthetic for nearly two decades now. His meta-funk approach is not only an historical precedent for radical mixology, but one that continues to be vital. His recent collaborators include the Wordsound crew (on Crooklyn Dub Consortium and Dubadelic's 2000 *A Bass Odyssey*) and DJ Spooky and Soul Slinger (on the recent *Tetragrammaton* project), while his Axiom label's *Axiom Dub: Mysteries Of Creation* compilation features tracks by We and Sub Dub.

"I think music should be lost," he says. "It should just be something you can use to get lost in, which might lead you to one thing, then another, then another, then another, and maybe in the end there's something you actually learn which is more than just a sound experience. Things connect in the end, somehow, mysteriously."

David Linton and Hahn Rowe, who record together as Circuit Bible, and Ben Neil, who has just released an album, *Triptych*, featuring DJs Spooky and Olive, all occupy a similar position to Laswell. As long-term inhabitants of experimental music (Linton has played with Rhys Chatham and Diamanda Galas, Rowe was the violinist for Hugo Largo, and Neil has worked with Nicolas Collins and LaMonte Young), the three provide a continuity between the flowering of multimedia projects in the BDs and the present fusion of music and design metaphors. "I think what we're doing now is related to a lot of activities in the late 70s, early 80s where visual artists and musicians would collaborate," says Rowe. "I saw a greater division as the BDs progressed and now, hopefully, that's being broken down a bit."

"I think there's some parallels to the BDs in that that was a particularly New York off-shoot of the whole global punk cult and it was the most extreme take on that

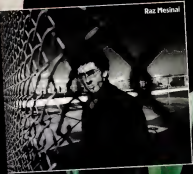
Soundlab's Beth Coleman



PHOTO: DOMINIC KLEMPNER



Raz Mesina



Axson's Bill Laswell (right) and DXT

aesthetic that developed anywhere," concurs Linton. "There's something about New York that had to do with people who were involved in aesthetics and interested in cross-pollination and they acted it out using rock. I think this crew is similar to that, but using turntables and coming off of something that is a global trend to begin with and then, through proximity to the art world, finding its own particular pocket. Some of the surface things about it, the darkness and potential scariness of it, have always been in the subconscious of New York."

Unlike the confrontational aspect of New York post-punk, the Illbent take on urban flux is one of incorporation. "The BJs sensibility of art music to me was the whole free improvisation, Zorn, Downtown kind of school," says Neill. "The concept of the drone is such a great vehicle for the integration of all sorts of different musical elements, whereas if you look at the BJs approach to integration of these exploded vocabularies of music that we're all working with now, it was really about juxtaposition, not really about integration. That's where my kinship with the whole Ambient/Illbent scene comes from."

That instrumental music which aspires to the paradigm of the DJ mix is being pioneered in New York should be no surprise. As Neill says, "I think the great thing about New York is this incredible mixture of things that you encounter even in four or five blocks, just the way that all these things are constantly blending. Whenever I leave New York and go to a smaller city, it always strikes me how people have to experience this culture clash through some second-hand means, whereas in New York it's just hanging you all the time."

All of these post-Hip-Hop musicians are tapping into the inherent political message that is embedded in the multifarious grooves of a great mix. "All the old art forms from the last century that are still with us look at the world through the buffer of one person's version," says Linton. "There's a feeling that these things are depleted, which is why people are looking to other cultures for models. Which ties into the whole cycle thing and group participation model versus a single linear narrative where you ride one person's emotional line through an experience. If everybody is identifying with that person up there and riding that one emotional line, then they're not feeling their own emotions."

Byzar, a loosely knit improvising collective of seven rotating members (turntables, violin, guitars) that is gradually shifting their focus from "textural, atmospheric material to more dynamic, dance-

oriented stuff", has a similar outlook on mixology. "It strikes me as a way of coping with New York because there are so many simultaneous elements going on during the day," says Byzar's guitarist and mixer AK Atoms. "The more I got into making atmospheric music and listening to really subtle sounds, the city took on a symphonic element. Between cars and traffic and people mumbling, it's really interesting if you listen to it in a focused way. Usually, you're in a passive relationship with the urban noise. Mixology is a way of taking that passive experience and translating that into an active experience. That's my role in Byzar: trying to shape everything and balance sounds so that they can live with each other. Illbent is aggressively inclusive." "Everything is allowed," adds Lucy Walker, who plays turntables in the group. "I think it's very easy to do a bad parody of an Illbent DJ set or a Byzar performance, Christ knows. Random shit in a random order. Something very fast one second and something extremely textural and probably some well known Ambient thing, followed by an Alex Reece track, followed by an Hawaiian track, would probably sum up the Illbent parody."

Trying to define Byzar's music in a more positive light, Walker says, "Illbent describes that whole combination of beats with the spiritual power or whatever it is that makes you dance and listen so hard and the whole New York City fuckin' pollution and airwaves. I'm obsessed with the fact that the airwaves are choc-a-bloc with Oprah, Wifey and beeper numbers and cell-phones. So, the work is to process this information overload against the measure, against the rhythm. I had this vision of how New York City pollution is being processed by us all and digested and made beautiful. In detail there were all the totems, vibrations and compressions and the grids of New York."

Like the Wordsound massive, Byzar express this idea of pollution with tiny, tactile bass patterns. "Low end is another obsession," says Atoms. "To me it's really close to sensation. It's less an assault on the ears than it is a massaging of the upper body. A friend of ours has this backpack, but it's actually a bass speaker and you strap it on. It's actually for virtual reality, but we plug into music and the bass just goes, 'Boom!' It's great, it's like direct bone conduction or something. You can't get away from it."

“Environments have a lot to do with sound. There's something in the air in New York. The pollution makes the music sound so rugged”

Byzar



Maybe our bass player should use it as a monitor now."

This conflation of music and design is one of libbert's favourite tropes. Trying to make the gallery swing to the pulse of the city or encouraging interactivity through environmental engineering is part of the music's Utopian political ideal. "Rather than going out and demonstrating and making counter-attacks on the system, I think the more constructive way to approach it is to build a life outside of it that is creatively fulfilling," says Adams. "This is an integration of technology and spirit. We're not Luddites. I think what's important is that most of the visions of the future are corporate gloom and doom scenarios and if we don't start acting, it will end up that way. It's the way in which you use and make those tools that determine the future. If you look at how natural systems work, instead of a line with a beginning and a dead end, it works in a way where the waste of the end of one cycle is the beginning of another cycle, it's more of a spiral. I think that paradigm of self-sustenance is something we need to move into on a global scale."

Where, the musical adjunct of the multimedia design crew MultiPolyOmni, talk about creating "omnisensual experiences" as part of this ideal. "There's a big history in New York of creating environments," says DJ Olive, one-third of We alongside Loop and Once11. "But I think the last several parties have lost that momentum. They're more generic, they're more in Manhattan, they've lost that sense of environment. The hype about eclectic DJ sets has allowed a lot of people to just get up and make a big mush in the centre of the room. And people go, 'Ooh, neat, experimental.' If the DJ is on a stage, it's like here I am, sit down, listen to me and decide whether you like it or not. It's like walking into a gallery, looking at the art and deciding if you like it or not. That's a crisis in representation, you know what I mean? You don't walk into a garden and look at the tree and decide if you like it or not. You go into a garden and chill out and think about what's happening."

"It's a responsibility to go to a party and interact with people and have a good time, rather than sitting down in a chair and focusing in on one supplied parcel of entertainment," adds Loop. "Everybody pays the same price and sees the same show. It's very industrial, it's like a factory line."

Seeking to privilege the audience at the sake of the DJ or musician, We's project is to "devalue and revalue." "It may not always be a pleasant experience," admits Olive. "But at least it's one that you haven't consumed."

The weekend before Halloween, Soundlab, a roving party famed for its decrepity exotic locales (inside the base of Brooklyn Bridge, a rusing barge on the Hudson River, a tiny loft nestled between sweatshops in Chinatown) that is the prime exponent of New York's new abstract eclecticism, pulled off perhaps its most surprising event yet.

On the 15th floor of one of the Financial District's towering monuments to capital, 30,000 square feet of deused office space that once belonged to a commodity brokerage firm withstood the bass quakes of DJ Wally's Junglistm, acted as a fittingly spare environment for Hahn Rowe's electroacoustic meadows, and managed to provide shifting perspectives for DJ Sing's mesmeric drones and low end throbs. Dark, sinister music teeming with spectral shadows, barely heard whispers and furtively implied motion dangled in the same space that once housed cardboard box deals which toppled Third World governments.

Appropriately, all this took place directly across the street from the former headquarters of the American Bank Note Company, bastion of Masonic imagery (the pyramid and eye on the back of the dollar bill) and unwitting thorpale of conspiracy theory. This surreal merger of art and commerce neatly illustrates the perilous state in which many of these musicians find themselves. As Ben Neill points out: "There aren't a

lot of the outlets that were available even ten years ago in terms of financial support. The whole non-profit world is really dying. That's the economic reality, it's not even a one-sided political issue anymore. People have to be insatiably look for other means of supporting their creative activities. That's one of the big parts of being an artist, you have to deal with the whole social and economic conditions that you're handed. I think artists have to keep their own conspiracy going in terms of just communicating and interaction. If there is such a conspiracy of capitalism, a lot of it's based on driving people towards a more isolated existence that doesn't promote social interaction or any kind of ritual."

Soundlab is run by the Cultural Alchemy duo, Beth Coleman (aka DJ Sing) and

Howard Goldkrand. Dotting their metric with phrases like "mimetic engineering for the electrotectural now", the duo court the highbrow conceptual artwork in order to find more spaces for their events. Describing past Soundlabs, Coleman says, "Truly, it was a Temporary Autonomous Zone. We had art guys coming in from SoHo, rave kids coming in from the club down the street and using it as their after-hours chill. "And the Chinese guy who would drop off the beer singing his opera tunes when he realised what we were doing," adds Goldkrand. For all the charismatic, postmodern, snake-oil salesmanship, the music frequently lives up to its own hype (especially live) by exploring their Utopian multivalence aurally, wondering about whether connections exist between Erik Satie's furniture music and Alec Empire's digital hardcore, sewing sutures that join Massive Attack and Phil Niblock, and reveling in the cosmos between John Cage and HipHop.

Their eclecticism is the result of their fusion of electronic music and architecture ("electrotectural"), using spatial design metaphors as a way of re-politicising postmodern rootlessness by forging a mobile space for placeless diasporic refugees. Electrotectural is not just an ultra-hip buzzword, but an ideal to live up to. "The thing at the Anchorage [a Soundlab event held the summer in the Brooklyn Bridge, and which Robin Rimbaud reported on in *The Wire* 151] worked out that you, as participant, became your own mixer. The space was so interesting acoustically that when you walked ten feet in the other direction, your soundscape changed. We had four isolated systems and the sounds migrated without becoming mush."

Inevitably, their idealistic rhetoric doesn't always deliver, and you can sense a hint of insularity creeping into the musics. Perhaps this is the result (or the cause?) of the fact that libbert's definition and boundaries are being played out more in the (often hostile) American media than on the dancefloor (which is also the result of the lack of available space). Or perhaps they've realised that any form of minimalism is only as smart as its interpreter and use obfuscating language to disguise what they fear is its superficiality. At its best, however, the music has a depth and an edge that weds dub's shadowboxing to the dark complexities of dronescaping. Or, as Olive describes it, "Ambient goes to school and gets shot." □

Libbert traces & Crooklyn dub

Crooklyn Dub Consortium Vols 1 & 2 (Wordsound)

Axiom Dub: Mysteries Of Creation (Axiomland/US)

This Is Home Entertainment Vol 2 (Liquid Sky)

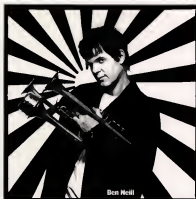
I Love NY Jungle (Jungle Sky/Liquid Sky)

Land Of Baboon (Silent)

Byzar/Sals Dub/We/DJ Spooky — Incursions In libbert (Asphodel)

Badawi — Bedouin Sound Clash (ROR)

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Rejecting the violence, misogyny and dollar bills of mainstream US rap, **Jeru The Damaja** is on a supernatural quest to recover the soul of real HipHop. Interview by Jake Barnes

HipHop may not have the best reputation for moral rectitude at the moment, but those who are only aware of its violence, misogyny, showy consumerism and overt sexuality don't see the whole picture. The recent death of Tupac Shakur, and the squalid feuding between East and West Coast rap artists that preceded it, was the latest outrage to scar the public face of HipHop. It's a music beset by pressures and mistrust. Time Warner's dropping of the Interscope label earlier this year was the latest in a long line of public betrayals of HipHop that stretches back to Ice T's consure over "Cop Killer" and the prosecution for obscenity of 2 Live Crew's *Luke Skywalker*. No other music has had to contend with such censure.

But while it is treated with disdain by the mainstream body politic, HipHop remains a hugely lucrative industry, at the very centre of what is popular in American music and culture and feted by the American recording industry. Against this confusing backdrop HipHop has to work out how to behave. Is it any surprise that it sends out contradictory signals?

To say HipHop is a broad church, encompassing many different attitudes and beliefs, is a cliché — but it's also a truism. While it is the most reckless and most commercial artists who shout the loudest, gain the most attention, airtime and column inches, and come to represent the public face of HipHop, there is a set of artists who offer an alternative view. These are the MCs and DJs who adhere to HipHop's core beliefs, ethics that were established in its earliest days back in the late 70s, and this is

reason for the messy killing of Shakur. HipHop's holy grail remains the expression of its uncorrupted, uncompromised art. Against all odds, HipHop retains the idea of the existence of its true unblemished self, forging a path through the corruption that surrounds it. An honest, righteous, anti-commercial, anti-conformist, self-determined, reformist art form, adroit at bringing the nose, the pain and justice. A retributive, multi-racial force able to unify and mobilise all those who hear it. This may sound contradictory to those whose views of HipHop have been moulded by Snoop Doggy Dogg and his ilk, but it is an equally representational one. Listen to "Come Clean" for proof.

So maybe Jeru is HipHop's King Arthur. He's come to embody HipHop's purity as a self-styled warning torch carrier for the music's idealist dreams, a world away from The Notorious B.I.G., Warren G, and the many other artists who raucously bubble up and down Billboard's Hot 100, shocking the nation with lewd values and ambiguous morality. From his first recording Jeru has pronounced HipHop sick, full of charlatans and failures. On the new album, *Wroth Of The Moth*, he names names. The track "One Day" identifies Bad Boy and Death Row Records, the two most commercially successful HipHop labels, as responsible for HipHop's demise, "Ya Payed Ya Sell" and "Bulshit" criticise HipHop's perceived moral decline.

"HipHop started as a non-violent way to release energy, no gimmicks, no frills," says Jeru. "These days HipHop is a place for negative energy and it's causing people to hurt each other. We need responsibility."

REALITY

where Kendrick, Jeru Davies, better known as Jeru The Damaja, fits in.

In the last couple of years, Jeru's powerful, exhilarating work has provided a steady, unwavering touchstone in this unstable musical world. To underline his astute connection with the roots of HipHop, his rapping style is often compared to that of the first generation artists, but it's for his mighty lyrics and the meeting sound designs of his regular collaborator and producer, Gang Starr's DJ Premier, that he is revered among the HipHop cognoscenti.

His debut album, 1994's *The Sun Rises In The East*, swept through HipHop like bleach through a U-bend, providing a crisp, clear set of moral and musical fundamentals for the sonically and morally lost. His first single, "Come Clean", remains a classic. With loping beats, yawning choruses between bass and breaks, and Jeru's masterful, didactic voice, it sounds like the Final Call. It was originally released as part of a sampler on Gang Starr's Ill Kid label in 1994, after which Jeru signed to Payday Records in New York. Jeru has long been part of Guru's Gang Starr Foundation, originally coming to prominence as a guest on Gang Starr's 1992 album *Daily Operation*, and his approach reflects the parent group's ongoing campaign for a return to the utopia of 'real' HipHop.

"Real HipHop hasn't been around for a while but it's going to be making a comeback," says Jeru when I meet him the morning after a London show and subsequent club brawl. The activities of the night before have left him a little worse for wear, but still ready to verbally spank his HipHop contemporaries. "There's no originality in HipHop, no individuality, too many spin-offs. That's what we're trying to get away from HipHop is sick."

The one unshakable factor that's driven HipHop since the beginning has been originality. From The Sugarhill Gang's coining of rhyme being, to the recent conflict between East and West Coast artists that may or may not have been the

Jeru's anti-commercial policy may, like his wish for the return of 'real HipHop', be idealistic and utopian, but he practises what he preaches. He eschews fashion. He dresses in dowdy jeans and combat clothing and wears his hair in an unkempt, knotty bunch. His visual message is clear. His style is bluntly anti-style, anti-fashion, anti-hype, anti-commerce. Jeru's other alias is The Dirty Rotten Scoundrel, a name that superficially rejects the glossy, polished look of the rappers that roll off the Uptown/Bad Boy production line in their glossy winter wear and sparkling jewellery, but on a deeper level signals his non-conformist, anti-mainstream attitudes.

When *The Sun Rises In The East* was first released it chimed through the HipHop nation like an alarm bell. The aural and lyrical impact of "Come Clean" acted as a wake up call to anyone with even a passing interest in the music. Its terrifying, absolutist sound remains the most potent result of Jeru's relationship with Premier, HipHop's most revered and accomplished producer.

Premier produces for many of HipHop's big names, including Nas and KRS1. His producers are always sharp, innovative, veering on the abstract, yet when he works with Jeru he creates a sound and an atmosphere that outstrips his other music. Jeru never collaborates with any other producer, an unusual situation for a HipHop artist, and the duo always work from the same studio, D&D in Brooklyn.

"Why work with anyone else if it works already with Premier?" he states deadpan. "We produce something no one else can do. There's no need for us to change."

The Jeru/Premier sound is a sparse one, built on drums and bass, full of intimate mini-psychodramas, detuned samples, nose terror. On *The Sun Rises*, tracks such as "Am I The Devil Happy?" defy easy listening. The rhythm is awkward and changeable, the samples shrill and unsympathetic. The between-track intervals set the teeth on edge like smoke alarms.

There's a methodology behind this. Jeru's sound is one that discourages the casual listener, one that's only open to the committed, the already converted. It's rap's sonic



BITES

attack taken to a high level, disrupting and overthrowing musical convention, cutting through anything even remotely mediocre. Furthermore it's an ear-splitting, pavement-cracking, headbanging, uncompromising monster of a sound. It is entertainment, after all.

"We work together and it's very natural," says Jeru, expanding on his relationship with Premier. "The beat always comes first. Premier comes up with something and from that my lines flow. We don't work every day, maybe three, four days a week. It takes us a few months to get an album done. What we do is what other people don't do. We don't dick into what's popular. We don't want to be part of a scene. I know I'm different, I've always been different and I be myself. I express who I am and that's why we get that different sound. It's not unusual to me because it's who I am but it's unusual compared to a lot of other artists because they don't sound like who they are."

Jeru puts himself forward as a leader and like the best leaders a mythology surrounds him, albeit a self-created, consciously fictional one patched from the dense hyper-libraries of trash culture. HipHop draws its influence from cartoons, Kung Fu flicks, science fiction, television, Mafia films and comics. This is the staple inspirational currency of the rapper. Witness the Wu Tang Clan's name and their adoption of monks' drawn straight from Marvel and Coppola. Golden Arms, Iron Man, Johnny Blaze, Lex Diamonds, Tony Stark. Jeru's no different. "I like the X-Men, the new Spiderman, the Tick, the new G-Force, the old G-Force, all of that. I love cartoons. I've always watched cartoons. I love martial art films. Jet Lee. I could talk for hours."

Supernatural imagery fits Jeru's lyrics. Lines such as "I was conceived in a furnace", "I'm more powerful than an A train", "I'm protected with the breastplate of righteousness", create an intoxicating visual whirlwind. His fictional personalities project images of Jeru as a modern day Samurai, self-equipped, silent and deadly, physically and mentally prepared for the rigours of urban living. This idea is augmented by his lyrical delivery, a sharp, precise vocalization that posts ideas clearly in the mind of the listener. Jeru's own pulp fiction is "Can't Stop The Prophet", a track that appears on both *The Sun Rises and Wrath Of The Mutha*. It distils his essence, part one detailing his (the Prophet's) fight against a character called Ignorance who's uptown. "making babes having babes" and his cohorts Envy, Hatred and Jealousy. In part two, on the new album, the Prophet fights Ignorance's new soldier Trickology. Both tracks are brilliant metaphorical tales of Good versus Evil, full of striking visual imagery and action. To compound the effect, the video accompanying the first version was in cartoon form.

"Why open your mouth if you haven't got anything to say? I'm not one of those

rappers who can rap about cars and parties and la la la," he says. He's anti-drugs (excluding the herb), pro-condoms, pro-education, anti-violence, anti-racism, anti-misogyny. Most things the stereotypical rapper isn't.

"It's a war out there and people need to be told," he remarks. His promotion of blackness, his belief that black people need to be aware of themselves, their past and their possible futures, is conveyed in a clear, uncomplicated fashion. "Black people in

America have to be woken up. A lot don't know their self or where they've come from. That's why we have black on black crime and the problems we do."

At the base of his ideology sits a quasi-religious set of beliefs that draws from several different faiths but adheres to none in particular. His vegetarianism, the emphasis on cleanliness, the belief in self-improvement, the disavowment of violence but the interest in martial arts and use of yin and yang as an explanatory tool, points to Islam, Buddhism, Taoism and Rastafarianism. On a guest appearance on a recent single, "One, Two, Pass It" by The D&D All Stars, he finished his rhyme with "No, I'm not a Jamaican but yes I'm a Rasta". When I quote the line back at him he nods in agreement but adds "I'm everything, all faiths". He calls his group The Perverted Monks. Why? "Monks, because we study all religion and all knowledge. Perverted, because we're odd".

Perhaps as a consequence of this multi-faith approach, Jeru is able to steer himself through the political minefield that defines black America and popular music. By being a friend to the Muslims, the Pentecostals, the Rastas and whoever else is operating a spiritual creed, he can speak to everyone, aggravate nobody, using a self-made collage of religions to make sense of his immediate surroundings in Brooklyn, a place he holds no great affection for. "It's dangerous where I live," he says. "There's so much crime out there, people getting shot all the time. You have to protect yourself physically and mentally. Sure I'd move."

Jeru's real background is as a New Yorker. "I've always lived in New York, in East Brooklyn. My mom was a New Yorker, my grandparents were from Cuba." His father is from the Bahamas and he has one sister. It's claimed he's in his mid-thirties but rumours about his age, in his thirties. He could be. He seems wise enough.

Jeru may represent a HipHop conservatism that upsets a liberal ideology. It's quite easy and quite correct to argue in favour of the ethics of mainstream HipHop as an expression of free choice and commercial imperatives. After all, "it's just entertainment, selling records", as Dr Dre once said of the East Coast versus West Coast rap conflict. But in a very real world of violence, easy money, drugs and death, Jeru offers a mental survival kit and a confidence not sourced in the Top 20. In the world of real HipHop, he's Number One. ☐ Wrath Of The Mutha is out now on Payday/FRR (through London/PolyGram).



PHOTO: TRICHEL TURBMAN

“ There's no originality in HipHop, no individuality, too many spin-offs. That's what we're trying to get away from. HipHop is sick ”

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In the 60s and 70s, the performances of **Charlemagne Palestine** were chaotic, ritualistic affairs, trance-inducing ceremonials of marathon duration. Now the long-lost music of this Minimalist pioneer is being picked up by a new audience. Interview by Edwin Pouncey

The name Charlemagne Palestine is not one that is automatically cited whenever the talk turns to music. New York, mid-60s, the heady, early days of Minimalist exploration. Yet alongside LaMonte Young, Terry Riley, Steve Reich, Philip Glass, Tony Conrad and others, Palestine was a pivotal figure in pioneering a new strain of classical composition and performance, one which rocked the art house by valorising volume, drones, repetition, rhythmic intensity, drawing inspiration from the ritual musics of central Africa and the Pacific Rim, testing the endurance levels of performer and audience alike during marathon, trance-inducing ceremonials.

Even in 60s New York, Palestine was an eccentric figure. His performances would often result in self-mutilation and physical violence, he played with a piano surrounded by fluffy toy animals, detoured into

the choir at his local synagogue and it was here that he learnt the basic endurance training for his later physically demanding music.

"I started at a very young age, singing certain Hebrew texts which often lasted many hours. In traditional Jewish orthodox music a woman is not permitted to sing, so boys take the role of singing in the highest voice and that was my job until my voice changed at 13. I already had this sense of the synagogue being a sacred, mirrored place. There's a lot of wood; they usually have enormous, high ceilings and occasionally a dome. You sang and everything would resonate. Even then I wasn't a religious Jew. I found that it was not easy to mix traditional life with normal Western life. I was still searching for a connection with that ancient consciousness and tradition, but I was a modern kid in America who

loved TV and synthesizers and gadgets, it was just incompatible."

divine insurrection

video art, combined a hedonistic, bohemian lifestyle with ecstatic faun-nal personal belief systems, travelling to Indonesia and elsewhere to study ancient tribal customs and commune with his own inner demons, a searching of the soul that he readily admits is still his main reason for making music, creating sculpture and staying alive. His recordings were invariably released on small, obscure labels in limited editions, which partly explains his disappearance from the official histories of the classical avant-garde, that and his decision in the mid-70s to effectively abandon music for a life in sculpture and fine art.

Charlemagne Palestine now lives in Europe, commuting back and forth from his home in France to the office of his new Netherlands-based record company Barrooni (who have just reissued his 1974 recording *Four Manifestations On Six Elements*, with post-production work by Thomas Köner and Sonic Youth's Lee Ranaldo).

"My musical career began more in Europe than it did in America," he explained when I spoke to him recently. "Europeans immediately saw this relationship between the work that physical artists and sound artists like myself were making in the 60s. I was little more than 20 years old and I'd never been to Europe, but from the first time I arrived it became my second home, my saviour."

Sacred chants and resonance

Charlemagne Palestine's natural home is Brooklyn, New York, where he was born (as Charles Martini) in 1947 and brought up in a Jewish household that was situated a stone's throw from where the American version of the Teddy bear was invented in 1902 (a coincidence that would play an important part in his development as an artist and musician during the 70s). At the age of seven he was urged by his parents to join



Soap opera in a bell tower

At the age of 13 Palestine was accepted into New York's High School of Music and Art. His search for the ideal instrument on which to play the music that he was starting to hear in his head was rewarded three years later when he took a job as carillonist at a Protestant Episcopal church to the Museum of Modern Art.

"They had a carillon with a traditional clavier and for me it was like a continuation of my singing in the synagogue, it was something I had to do every day. There are these oak levers and pedals which you have to play very physically, you smash your fists on the levers which move clappers with counter-weights that hit the bells above your head. I played twice on Sunday, and for six years, until I was 22, I never missed a day."

Although he was obliged to play traditional hymns and "Christmas tunes" on the carillon bells, Palestine was also allowed

to perform some of his own music, first in the spirit of Cage, Stockhausen, Bono and Xenakis, but later shifting into his own style which began to attract a daily audience.

"I made something that became a kind of musical soap opera where I would play a series of chords and elements which would last for 15 minutes. The next day I would continue exactly where I had left off and it evolved into quite an elaborate thing. I was playing in a bell tower that was right down the street from Saint Patrick's cathedral, which was like playing in your Puccini's Circus. Thousands of people heard it every day."

One of the thousands who heard and responded to Palestine's musical soap opera was fellow experimental musician and film maker Tony Conrad, who was to have an important influence on the budding composer's career.

"I was playing this episode of my daily soap opera one day and all of a sudden I hear this guy screaming, 'Incredible! Oh, fantastic! This is incredible!' up the stairway of the bell tower. I just kept playing and by the time he made it to the top I had finished my

PICTURED THE BLIND MONKEY

piece. It turned out that he was Tony Conrad and he had been experimenting changing with a set of Russian bells while he was a student at Harvard University. I later found out that he was the creator of one of the first Minimal films called *The Flicker*, and at the time I met him he was working with his wife on a totally different idea called *Conning Attractors* which was a film about everybody and everything in his life."

Meeting the Minimalists

When Palestine came into contact with Conrad a whole new world of discovery and invention was opened up to him. In the late 60s, when their meeting took place, New York was a hotbed of artistic activity where no idea was too obscure, outrageous or unacceptable. Through Conrad, Palestine was introduced to some of the core members of New York's avant-garde, a diverse crowd of painters, performance artists, dancers, sculptors and musicians, some of whom were to become comrades during his personal dream quest to discover his own pure, sacred music.

"Tony had commissioned six composer friends of his to provide the music for *Conning Attractors*, some of whom were already known like LaMonte Young, Marian Zazeela, Terry Riley and John Cale. He asked me to play bells for the film because he was still stunned by my soap opera. I met everybody at Tony Conrad's apartment because 24 hours a day somebody famous was up there: Taylor Mead, Gerard Malanga, the entire Andy Warhol entourage and even Valerie Solanas (who would later shoot Warhol) were there."

How did he get on with this group?

"LaMonte Young was impossible, very difficult. Terry Riley always sounded like a friendly West Coast kind of guy, but with LaMonte... Forget it! Andy Warhol was never the warmest guy in the world, but at least he would answer if you asked him something. After he was shot he would just look at you. It was hard to get anything from him after that."

Pandit Pran Nath

In 1969 Palestine was soon to move to California at the invitation of Morton Subotnick, whom he had met while working with synthesizers in search of his "Golden Sound" at the Intermedia Centre at New York University. Subotnick was then the head of the Centre, and when he was offered the directorship of the California Institute of the Arts (Cal Arts) he was asked to choose select students to

accompany him. Subotnick invited the composer Ingram Marshall and Palestine.

Before he left New York, however, Palestine composed a drone piece for church organ which he called "The Spectral Continuum Drones" and came into contact with Indian teacher and classical singer Pandit Pran Nath. Both events would add to his development as a musician and strengthen his endurance as a performance artist.

"I began to study with Pandit Pran Nath who I met through Timothy Leary's assistant Baba Ram Dass [re Richard Albert] [Albert] had experimented with psychedelic drugs with Leary at Columbia University where he saw the 'magic of God' when he was on a trip and became a student of the great Indian masters. He studied with Pran Nath, but more on the religious than the vocal training side. I had this pothead neighbour who went to these meetings and one day he came back saying, 'Charlemagne, you've got to see this Ram Dass guy who's fantastic, and he's got this Indian singer who will blow you away.' So I went to hear Pandit Pran Nath who sang this slow, evolving droned where the intonation changed over a very short period of time. I had never heard anything so incredible, and I became his student. This was a couple of years before LaMonte Young and Terry Riley studied under him and by that time I had left for California. It was like the synagogue, he wanted me to give up my life for him and I wasn't willing to do that."

California droning

Once in California Charlemagne continued to work with synthesizers, encouraged by Subotnick and Donald Buchla, both of whom were working alongside Robert Moog on the early stages of synthesizer technology.

"I built an electronic instrument which I called the Drone Machine that made the sound of the Indian tambura or the sruti box, only much more controlled. There weren't many synthesizers that could do what it did. It used no voltage control and it had 15 switches fitted so that I could change the beat between tones by one per cent. I later toured with the Drone Machine and on the *Four Manifestations* record the two electronic pieces were made using it."

For a while he considered trying to market his invention, but there was no room for the Drone Machine in the practical world of modern synthesizer technology. It was at Cal Arts, however, where he came into contact with his first Bosendorfer Imperial grand piano, the instrument he had been unknowingly searching for and the one that would completely change both his life and his musical vision.

"One day I wandered into this room and sat down in front of this enormous, beautiful looking piano. I started playing and while the tone continued I could hear all the detail of the overtone system as clearly as I could when playing my Drone Machine. That's when I decided to make piano music, but for this make of piano alone, and that's when I started to get obsessed with that instrument. It turned out to be the thing I had been looking for, but I had no preconceptions about it."

Strumming Music

After this important and influential discovery Palestine temporarily returned to a version of the "Spectral Continuum Drones" music he had worked on in New York, transposing the church organ "score" to the Bosendorfer. This would evolve into a technique (and eventually a piece) called "Strumming Music", his most famous work which was performed in countless versions during the 70s.

"It started on middle E and followed on with the octave below, then the octave below that in a kind of strumming fashion. I gradually brought out all the overtone system to create a single piece that lasted up to five hours. It was very impressionistic. It wasn't quite what would turn into "Strumming Music", but it had all the elements."

On the cusp of the 70s, he was asked to perform at a festival in Rome by Simone Forti, a dancer at New York's famous Judson Dance Theatre who had also studied with Pandit Pran Nath.

PHOTO: LEE LENNE



"She knew a guy called Fabio Sargentini who was one of the first guys to show an interest in Minimal music and dance. She was invited to perform at this festival he was organizing and because I was working with her on this piece — a sound piece which involved my voice and body — I was invited along as well. When I got to Rome there were LaMonte Young, Terry Riley, the famous dancers of the time, Steve Reich and Philip Glass. That's when I first became a part of that whole Minimal music movement."

NYC: slight return

In 1973 Palestine returned to New York, where he would produce some of his most physically demanding, challenging and shocking work. On his arrival and with no base, he was befriended by, among others, Philip Glass whose career was in the ascendant. Palestine had begun to make a series of psychodramatic videos which he describes as "sonic investigations" where physical, vocal (and sometimes mechanical) rituals were acted out using the camera as an extension of the body. Such works prompted the Sonnabend Gallery in New York to commission him to record *Four Manifestations* on Sir Elmore's, a piece that included two electronic and two keyboard works on which he was assisted in the studio by Glass's engineer Kurt Munkacsi.

As the 70s wore on, the extended drones of "Strumming Music" gave way to a more flamboyant, mystical and violent performance, one in which Palestine's childhood endurance training at the synagogue and his later bobbing energies were put to the test.

"When I returned to New York the music began to change and the strumming technique became more like an aggressive flamenco. I no longer felt that bad back energy I experienced when I was living in California. Eventually I was doing something called "Timbral Assault" and another more strenuous piece called "The Lower Depths" that took over two hours to perform, where I would go down to my lower depths."

By this time he had started to ritually prepare himself for his physically and mentally draining performances.

"I would drink Napoleon cognac, which was an important stimulant for me when I played. I would chain smoke Indonesian Kretek cigarettes made from cloves, because cloves are a mild anesthetic. I would anesthetize myself until I was in a trance-like state, then I would sit down at the piano in this dark, red-lit room and start on this journey. I would have all my stuffed animals arranged around me that I would look at. I was only with them and myself and we went off to another world."

"I don't remember time passing, but at the end I would look down and see that my hands were all bloody and that I had experienced this feeling of

ecstasy. I had an idea there was sound there, I had an idea where I was, but I wasn't conscious of the minutes going by or the physical things that were taking place. I didn't know I was getting tired or that I was bleeding until it was over. It was also astonishing for the people who were watching."

Palestine's intense performances were now being compared with those of Iggy Pop and the notorious performance artist Chris Burden. "I personally felt that I was going too far," he says. "I was drinking heavily, burning my candle at both ends and inventing this playing style that was a big influence on the New Wave rock musicians, but I didn't know what the fuck I was doing to tell you the truth. I was getting ecstatic reviews but I couldn't

even make a living. I was broke. I was taking myself to the limit and I was near to having a nervous breakdown. I couldn't pay the rent so I had to think of something else."

The Blind Monkey

That something else was to transfer his energies from music to sculpture. He was particularly interested in making the stuffed toy animals with which he shared his piano and emotions real, and created a personal divinity mythology that would exist in a secret realm called Charleworld.

"In my late teens somebody gave me a toy animal that looked a little like me, he became my trademark. Then Simone Forti gave me a monkey and somebody else gave me a bear and gradually I began to form this little family. Later I began to see animism in Hindu and African culture so I invented a divinity mythology which was based around my own life, only in this strange, adolescent, 60s American way where the divinities were these stuffed animals."

According to Charlemagne, one inspiration for expanding the idea of stuffed animal divinities was due to the fact that "it was something everybody hated! I thought, gee, I'm doing something right."

On the front of the Barooni CD version of *Four Manifestations* there is an image of The Blind Monkey, one of Charlemagne's most important divinities.

"All my animals are autobiographical. The Blind Monkey was a Steiff monkey, the company that invented the Teddy bear in 1902 in Germany while the Teddy bear was being manufactured at the same time in the part of Brooklyn where I was born. The Blind Monkey is me. It's like Odysseus after his journey."

Working with Steiff, Charlemagne has constructed an enormous mask of a bear which sits on the side of a mountain near St Tropez in the South of France. "It

resembles the big totem structures of Easter Island. It's five metres high. I made it out of copper, so now it's turned green like the trees."

"As my music had this sacred connection, these pieces tend to be a re-evaluation of sacred sculpture."

Comeback and flashback

After a long hiatus, Charlemagne is once again performing his music. This August he appeared at the Sonambere and Sonderangerbeot festivals in Berlin, and sparked by

the interest shown in the releases of *Four Manifestations* and *Strumming Music*, Barooni is to issue recordings which Palestine made for Glenn Branca's Neutral label in the late 80s.

"I invented so many things during the 70s that I had to abandon because I was never

able to develop them satisfactorily. But since travelling around the world and becoming a student of anthropology and ethnology I've almost become another person who is the archivist of the strange things that this guy Charlemagne Palestine did. I could spend another ten years bringing out what he wanted to do 20 years ago, but couldn't. I could have taken a smoother road. Instead I chose the rougher road and I'm still looking, but that would seem to be my destiny. Here I am 49 years later and these things I created all that time ago are coming back, and for the first time they feel right to me now." □ *Four Manifestations* and *Strumming Music* are available on Barooni (through SAMVital) and New Tone (through Impetus) respectively.



"I would anaesthetize myself until I was in a trance-like state, sit down at the piano in this dark, red-lit room and start on this journey. At the end I would look down and my hands were all bloody"

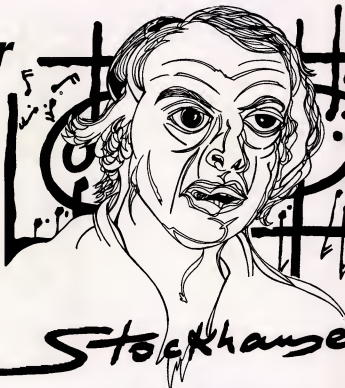
the primer

Karlheinz Stockhausen fulfils a seminal role in 20th century music, and there is no doubt in my mind — or his — that he will be equally revered and vilified in the 21st century and beyond. Starting out from Teutonic serialism he fashioned a sound world uniquely his own: magical, mystic, uncompromising. His philosophical beliefs feed obtrusively into his art, as they should. He insists he is merely the channel for music, while accepting the ludos due a creator. That underlying conflict runs through his work. He will eagerly employ chance and performer discretion in his compositions, yet set strict limits, specific guidelines which ensure that the product is unmistakably Stockhausen. Apparently secure in certainty, his business has been paradox, and the reconciliation of supposed incompatibilities. He invented World Music: in *Kurzwelten* and *Hymnen* he literally plucked sounds from the air, drawing from the celestial sphere of shortwave radio frequencies, essences of most cultures having access to radio. In the stunning *Telemusik* he went beyond collage to meld music from countless traditions into a startling, unique, fertile hybrid.

He has been at the centre of European music for five decades, studying with Messiaen and Pierre Schaeffer, teaching Cornelius Cardew, Tim Souster, Kevin Volans, influencing Miles Davis, John Lennon, Philip Glass, magnetising, fascinating and/or exasperating Bono, Boulez, Cage, Copland, Globokar, Kagel, Ligeti, Maderna, Nono, Penderecki, Pousseur... The list is endless, the selection arbitrary.

Chöre Für Doris/Choral/Drei Lieder/Sonatine/Kreuzspiel (Stockhausen Verlag 1 CD)

Kontakta-Punkte is Stockhausen's official Opus 1, but in the early 70s he admitted a number of earlier works into the authorised canon. All of the pieces on this CD, from 1950–1, pre-date *Kontakta-Punkte*. *Sonatine* for violin and piano pays homage to Schoenberg. *Chöre* and *Choral* would not obtrude at a Three Chors Festival. The song texts in *Drei Lieder* are by Stockhausen himself. Already the composer inhabits his own mythology, as he would, more dramatically, in *Licht*. The String Man "has torn his hands... has already sat a long time in the rain... his ear perceives, the never played". Stockhausen's is not the human-centric universe of the Romantics, where even the natural elements are projections of human passions. As early as *Kreuzspiel* he was looking into the cosmos, reflecting the stars in a use of "sound-points", but perhaps the main significance of this piece lies in its reaching



In the first of an occasional series, we offer a neophyte's guide to the must-have recordings of some of the names we like to drop a lot. This month, Barry Witherden tackles the avant garde Tonmeister, **Karlheinz Stockhausen**

towards total serialism, systematising sets of pitches and durations

Elektronische Musik 1952–60 (Stockhausen Verlag 3 CD)

Kontakte
(Wergo 6009 CD)

This CD collects crucial documents in the evolution of electronic music. *Electronic Studies I & II* attempted to apply serial principles to timbre and frequency, areas which resisted control in instrumental music. From this perspective their success was limited but, as music, *Study I* at least is a triumph. Despite the straightforward of serial methodology, this alien song from a

mistakenly-magnified future blooms richly and freely out of the ether.

Kontakte exploits differing perceptions of rhythm according to the speed at which they are presented. Stockhausen used it to develop Moment Form, where each sound event, though part of a structure or process, is viable in itself, not dependent on that process or structure for its validity. (The Verlag CD features the purely electronic version, while the Wergo version adds piano and percussion soloists reacting to the taped elements, with David Tudor instead of Aloys Kontarsky on piano.)

In the early 50s, *Etude* prompted a rift between Stockhausen and musique concrète pioneer Pierre Schaeffer, polarising electronics between Cologne and

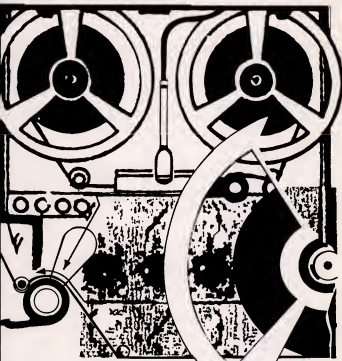


ILLUSTRATION: SAVAGE PEROLA

Pans, sounds synthesized or found. A few years later Gesang Der Jünglinge reconciled the methodological and philosophical dichotomy, locating electronic and natural elements into a strange, exultant hymn praising God and celebrating the purity of the human voice, despite the electronic manipulation.

If music exists only in time, sound inhabits space. In Gesang Stockhausen experimented with placing and moving sounds; it had been done before, of course, not least by the Venetian Renaissance masters, but electronic technology gave Stockhausen a freedom that went beyond hooked and amorphous devices, beyond simple echo and stereo effects, moving a single sound as it happened. He designed the piece for five channels, with the boy's voice assigned to its own overhead speaker.

Carré/Gruppen

(Stockhausen Verlag 5 CD)

Between 1955-7 Stockhausen tried similar spatial tricks with live performers in Gruppen, where three independent, equal (but not identical) orchestras flank

the listener.

The subsequent Carré has four orchestras with added mixed choruses using phonic sound differentiations. The conductors face inwards, and the audience was meant to be ranged diagonally across a square auditorium. As in Kontakte, Stockhausen employs Moment Form. Carré, he said, "does not carry you along but leaves you in peace". The listener can elect to make the journey or simply enjoy the ever-renewed present. The music is not as meditative as this may suggest: There are violent outbursts, though nothing as intense as the most turbulent passages of Gruppen which predict the textures of John Coltrane's Ascension and Ornette Coleman's Free Jazz. Significantly, having broken off from Carré to compose Kontakte, Stockhausen left composer and AMM-founder Cornelius Cardew to work up the score from sketches and instructions. During the

60s and early 70s he would increasingly relinquish direct control over the details of his music.

Given the crucial importance of the spatial relationships between each group of performers and the audience, both these works present major realisation problems. It was relatively easy for taped electronic sounds to be projected around an auditorium, with the speakers more or less surrounding the audience, but for Carré and Gruppen Stockhausen somehow needed to get the same effect. The solution was a spherical performance space, with the audience suspended in the middle. His dream was briefly fulfilled in Osaka where a suitable hall was constructed for the 1970 World Fair.

Klavierstücke I-XI/ Mikrophonie I & II

(Sony Classical SZK 53346 2CD)

Klavierstücke

(Wergo WER 60135/36-50 CD)

In the notes for the Sony CD, containing 1965 performances of the Klavierstücke, Stockhausen—who evidently believes that your art's what you eat—gives a detailed report on every meal, snack and drink taken by pianist Kontarsky during the days of the recordings. The first cycle, numbers I-IV, are exotic miniatures written in Paris in 1952-3 when Stockhausen was studying with Messiaen. During this time he was evolving from "point" music to "groupes"—or gruppen. "VI" exploits factors largely outside the control of composer or musician, its overall structure governed by the natural periods of sound decay and reverberation. "XI" displays Stockhausen's first thorough-going application of aleatory principles, the score comprising irregularly distributed groups of notes which the pianist plays randomly within certain parameters: the pianist decides what order to play the groups in, but the score contains instructions in each group which affect the way that the next, whatever it might be, is realised.

The Mikrophonie, composed in 1964-5, were created in real-time, in front of an audience. The mechanics of sound production and transformation became integral to the performance. In "Mikrophonie I" two tam-tams are agitated by one set of musicians, while a second set monitors the results through hand-held microphones and a third modifies the sounds with filters and potentiometers. "Mikrophonie II" involves similar procedures but uses a chorus as the main sound generator, and patches in samples from earlier works. The results are electric.

The evolution from strictly notated scores to music which could only exist in performance was already discernible in the Klavierstücke, but with Mikrophonie I & II Stockhausen had no choice but to fuel in-flight. Forsaking serialist discipline, he strove to "mediate between organisation and non-organisation". Characteristically, having set up a situation accommodating performer choice, Stockhausen modified the score during rehearsal because the interactions were unpredictable.



Stockhausen, 1959

PHOTO: WDR ARCHIV/STOCKHAUSEN VERLAG

Hymnen

(Stockhausen Verlag 10 ACD)

Like a number of Stockhausen's other works, including *Kontakte*, *Hymnen* from 1967 exists in more than one form. It can be 'performed' purely on tape as well as with soloists, when the problems of exercising control while using aleatoric and improvisatory elements rise again. Both versions are included here. This monumental ceremony, comprising four "Regions" totalling some two hours, also exists in a version with an orchestral third "Region".

In the light of contemporary sampling and sequencing capabilities, *Hymnen* may seem technically primitive and clumsy, but it's still a remarkable experience emotionally, an imaginative expedition which has no parallel. Where *Telemusik* and *Gesang* were compacted, their components smelted and transmuted into a dense conglomerate, *Hymnen* lays out its processes and constituents. Stockhausen builds the work from national anthems, banal tunes snatched from less than respectable employment and pressed into utopian service. He wants them to fetch all their disreputable baggage so that he can empty it out, mixing it with natural sounds, electronic interventions and the reactions of live performers, his citizens of Harmonie. Stockhausen's comments on *Carrié* quoted earlier seem better applied to *Hymnen*. Listeners have

to be content with being on the train with its slow pace, extended transformations, passages of near-silence and shortwave static. *Hymnen* requires you to meditate on your journey's purpose rather than fret about arriving, while an inebriated, rather sinister voice asks you to place your bets, Stockhausen puns with sound — as when crowd noises mutate into swamp-ducks — and a Brechtian (or proto-Pöhl) episode lets us eavesdrop on a conference from the recording sessions themselves. *Hymnen* was my visa to Stockhausen's empire, and it always provokes a special nostalgia

Stimmung

(Stockhausen Verlag 12 2CD)

If *Hymnen* isn't Stockhausen's masterpiece, *Stimmung* (Tuning) from the following year must be. Written during a frozen Long Island winter, *Stimmung* incorporates erotic poems written for his wife together with a selection of the many names of God, but its foundation is a specified series of overtones on a B flat. The notes are to be sung softly, without vibrato, resonating only in the cranial spaces, but bringing out the overtones as strongly as possible. Live performances of this piece, around an hour-and-a-quarter long, can be utterly bewitching, with the six singers ranged in a semi-circle in the gloom. Chanted vowels and phonemes swirl in a twilight of consequential chords, with occasional fully-formed recognizable words darting out to illuminate the mists from within. The shifting textures suggest images which would later be given substantial form in the most effective scenes of *Donnerstag aus Licht*. Play this through the headphones and slide into an alien but protective realm.

Aus Den Sieben Tagen

(Stockhausen Verlag 14 7CD)

Fais Voile Vers Le Soleil/

Liaison (from Aus Den Sieben Tagen)

(Harmonia Mundi HMA 190795 CD)

The circumstances which triggered the creation of this titanic sequence — 15 works on seven CDs in the Verlag version — were exceptional, as were the results. In May 1968 Stockhausen's wife Mary was due to return, with their children, from a holiday in America. Instead she sent a letter ending their relationship. Stockhausen pleaded by telegram and, when she did not reply, determined that he did not wish to go on living. He began a hunger strike, designed to bring Mary home, and starved himself for seven days. Toward the end of the second day he wrote a text, verbal instructions for improvisation, except that he prefers the term *Intuitive Music*. After four days without food, he went to the piano and played a single note. "How this note shocked me... for days on end I had heard nothing but birdsong... I played another note [and heard] an inner life such as I had never heard before." Finally he had let go, leaving the performers to interpret his words through the intermodulation of their own personalities and experiences. Yet the regime was

punishing. "Goldstaub", for example, calls on the players to fast for four days "in complete silence... sleep as little as possible... close your eyes just isn't." From the distress of his personal situation came a catharsis which would shape his output for years to come.

The full, exhausting seven CD set of *Sieben Tagen* costs over £100. Neophytes might be better off (in more ways than one) going for the budget-priced *Harmonia Mundi* CD, which gives an excellent representative flavour of the whole work, and features Stockhausen and several of his regular collaborators

Trans

(Stockhausen Verlag 19 CD)

So many of Stockhausen's compositions call for a degree of theatrical realisation that it should have been no surprise when, in 1977, he eventually announced that everything he wrote in future would be subsumed into the massive opera, *Licht*. *Trans* has, to the best of my knowledge, only once been performed in Britain in anything near its intended form, at a student concert at the Royal College of Music. The piece came, virtually whole, in a dream. Stockhausen saw vertical ranks of string players bathed in a reddish violet light. They moved stiffly, mechanically, abruptly changing the musical material as the sound of a born shute, massively amplified, kept over the heads of the audience. From some concealed place behind the strings, wind and brass, other instruments could be heard. Stockhausen hints at another world behind the everyday, and has alluded to the Tibetan Book of the Dead, believing that this music may help guide a newly dead soul on its journey.

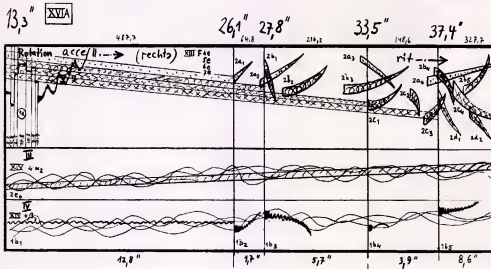
This CD includes the world premiere concert performance, opening with a gasp from the audience as the eerily-lit strings appear, as well as a studio recording. Both versions are spellbinding.

Ylem

(Stockhausen Verlag 21 CD)

Developing from the technique — the gamble — pioneered in *Sieben Tagen*, *Ylem*'s score comprises a short text, a skeletal blueprint for a piece that always surprises by the similarity of each realisation. Again, though Stockhausen is content to offer verbal recommendations rather than the strict instructions of his fully-notated scores, musicians have commented how strong and unavoidable they find the guidance. *Ylem* was inspired by the oscillation theory of the origin of the universe. The process used in the piece is a loose parallel to that of *Kreuzspiel*. The players, clustered in a group around the keyboard, are invited to play a note from the centre of their instruments' range. They then gradually move outwards, pitch-wise and physically, spreading out into the audience and towards the edges of the performance space until, at a shouted syllable, the expansion halts, and the contraction back into the point of genesis begins.

Stockhausen had now become a facilitator, an initiator, rather than a maker. The technique would be developed and varied in such pieces as *Atmen Gibt Das*



Leben, but by the end of the decade the trend would be reversed and, with the complex projects making up *Licht*, the composer would become architect, ring-master, priest and court jester to a distinctive visual as well as aural universe.

Donnerstag

(Stockhausen Verlag 30-4CD)

Licht is planned as seven nights of music theatre. *Donnerstag* was the first day to be completed and staged. The composer's personal mythology is complex, abstruse, mystical and, in many ways, naive, redolent of the most optimistic and gentle elements of 60s hippy-shit. Thursday's opera takes in a rainbow in dry-nice, a runaway toy lorry, a remarkable shadow-show reminiscent of Indonesian puppets, an entirely wordless Act comprising a trumpet concerto representing the Archangel Michael's circumnavigation of the Earth, and a bag-lady who asks audience and performers, "Why don't you all go home?" In *Licht*'s cosmology, Stockhausen himself can be identified with Michael, if not with the Almighty. Yet, in among all these miracles and wonders, the music itself was probably the most conventional that Stockhausen had ever written or inspired, and the echoes of Wagner, though distant and distorted, were not confined to the colossal scale or the cast of archetypes.

Music For Flute

(Stockhausen Verlag 28-2CD)

Like *Chore Für Dots* and *Choral*, *Music For Flute* is ideal for playing to people who want to know if modern

composers can write "proper music" before they will take their more experimental works seriously. The flute pieces are — not more personal, because Stockhausen's music is nothing if not personal — but more intimate than the other compositions spotlighted in this survey. Several of them were written as gifts for friends and relations and most have, of course, ended up being incorporated in some part of *Licht*, whatever their original context. Their accessibility and classical elegance will surprise anyone who thinks Stockhausen

is only capable of producing harsh, cerebral music. □ The Stockhausen Verlag is Stockhausen's own label, and is in the process of a mass resuscitation of the "official" recordings of the composer's music. The Verlag CDs recommended here, which come with lengthy liner notes and Stockhausen's own artwork, are available by mail order only. Write for a catalogue to Stockhausen Verlag, Kettenberg 15, 51515 Kürten, Germany. Harmonia Mundi and Wergo CDs are distributed by Harmonia Mundi. Sony Classical goes through Sony.



PICTURED: A SECTION OF THE PERFORMANCE SCORE FOR *REKTION*
PHOTO: BERNARD PIERRE/STOCKHAUSEN VERLAG

Recently I had the dubious pleasure of seeing (and hearing) the film *Crossed*. David Cronenberg's inventably vanilla rendering of the most extreme of J.G. Ballard's novels. Aside from the controversy surrounding the transgression of such literature into film, *Crossed* raises other questions about the relationship between contemporary film and the extreme edges of contemporary music.

Crossed (the book) is cited, perhaps more than any other, by the industrial subculture within the city-of-painful-compulsion. There are many musicians (regulars in these waters) who would help given their eye teeth to contribute the sound to such a film. Scott Leisner, *Final Techno Annual*, Col. Sherry Puppey, *Soma*. Most. All of these musicians have a highly developed sense of *unheard*, which is something alien in the multiplex lesson must often deployed in film sound. By material I mean the life of the spaces and surfaces which compose the physical and emotional narrative so crucial in film: the stuff which cannot be spoken by actors or described by images alone. The stuff which is beyond the reach of more conventional film composers who still inhabit a world of 19th century musical ideas in which sounds are heard as being either musical or non-musical. Of course, none of the above mentioned composers was commissioned to provide the music for *Crossed*. Instead, the film has a conventional orchestrated score by Howard Shore augmented by some of the most wooden electric guitar playing imaginable. This music co-exists uneasily with functional and

upsets the viewer—is that sound a musical component, a synchronised effect, a memory? Is it off-screen or subjective? To ask these questions is to engage with the whole experience of the film far more completely.

The other conspicuously missing element is Reznor's dexterity with technology. Check out the laughable attempts by heavyweight Hollywood composers such as Hans Zimmer or James Newer to tackle generic Electronica. In Reznor's piece there seems to be a startling harmony between musical and non-musical elements which amplifies the impact and depth of the opening scenes. However, once the title sequence is over, we slip back into the conventional division where we can clearly identify music and sound as separate components. This is not done for dramatic reasons in fact more often than not the narrative would be aided by a more articulate orchestration of all sonic elements — even dialogue. The reason is purely one of working practice. In the case of *Seven* the sound design is particularly good and it manages to convey information on several levels while the underscore contents itself with varying hints of vague menace. The sound design is actually far more interesting as music than the contents of the official soundtrack CD. This is a familiar scenario when you find a rare, well designed film and decide to check out the soundtrack on disc, it will most probably omit everything but the operationally musical elements. Notable exceptions to this are Derek Jarman's *The Gleaners and I*, the *Blue*, the dialogue version of the Manga animation *Akira*, and David Lynch's *Eraserhead*. The CD of Peter

SCREENS not heard

prosodic sound design, and the whole is very much less even than the sink of its parts. With the exception of one scene in which the wrecked bodies of two cars are heard to steam and crack in an appropriately sensual, post-coital way, the bulk of the sound and music add nothing whatsoever to a film sorely in need of extra-textual extrapolation. A fantastic opportunity completely squandered.

It seems that the most interesting developments in this use of sound as a narrative carrier and in the long overdue dissolution of the divide between musical and non-musical sound are virtually unknown in the medium which could best make use of them. Film, conversely, is one of the last bastions of *unheard* musical phenomenon. Why is it, then, that so many composers winking diligently at the edges of music confess such a strong fascination with at least the idea of film — a medium so untapped by their example?

At its rare best film can incorporate sound and music in ways which impart a purpose and validity to musical approaches previously uncertain or undefined. A film like *Eraserhead* can validate an approach to the blending of sound, music and linear structure which men galvanises compositional work outside of the film context and gives rise to a whole aesthetic based around some narrative of bleak. In the case of the post-*Eraserhead* generation, this aesthetic is best represented in the music of Mark Thomas Koller, Starfish Pool, Lull, Holger Czukay, Simon Fisher Turner, Ingram Marshall, Max Eschey, Bernhard Günter, Ryan Sleds.

The technique of sampling spoken elements and sound effects, from cinema to industrial music, Electronica and HipHop soon develops into a more sophisticated exorcism of the narrative connotations of these elements. Film sound is taken as a jumping-off point, but very soon the musicians doing the jumping are producing far more interesting work than that found in even the most elaborate Hollywood sound design. Whatever your opinion of Trent Reznor's work in LA Industrialists Nine Inch Nails, there is no denying the impact of his theme music for David Fincher's *Seven* (whoever did the remix). The ambiguity of Reznor's sound sources immediately

Miedak's *Romeo Is Bleeding*, on the other hand, omits all the sonic detail which when combined with Philip Igham's score, actually brought the picture to life. What you remember as a complex and elaborate series of pieces in the cinema is, on CD, just a set of workmanlike music cues.

The sound design from *Eraserhead*, *Twain Peaks*, *Fire Walk With Me*, *Prospero's Books*, *The Hot Spot*, *Cities*, and *Trespass*, as well as the later Jarman films, all exemplify a total approach to sound which defies the standard film practice of segregating sound effects from music and assigning exclusive roles to each with little reference to the other. In a scenario almost unheard of, David Lynch actually designed his own sound for *Fire Walk With Me*. He knew the dramatic role the sound had to play and had clearly benefited from his long association with sound editor Alan Splet, collaborator on the *Eraserhead* soundtrack. Lynch also wrote much of the music and used processed musical elements embedded in the sounds on screen. One of his most effective decisions was to run a particularly disturbing scene with music so loud that the dialogue is almost completely obscured. The dramatic reason for this is clear, but it distressed the preview audiences so much that the American prints of the film all carry subtitles of the obscured lines.

The isolated moments in film which work on the level provide rich inspiration for musicians interested in the manipulation of pure sound and narrative. Non-film composers touched by the film aesthetic usually develop its potential far further than current film practice will allow, so ironically they define the ideal future face of film sound most effectively by not working in film.

We are still waiting for the full force of a truly chaotic union between the worlds of sound and image. For my money, this is still more likely to happen within the culture of film (as opposed to the realm of multimedia, which should be the accumulation of all we have learned from its component parts — film, music, graphics, 3D animation, Hypertext — but exhibits more the collected shortcomings of each element). But it's going to take a lot of work to erode the practices which stand in the way. □



Experimental musicians continue to draw inspiration from the sound of films such as *Eraserhead* and *Fire Walk With Me*. Meanwhile, in Hollywood, musical philistines rule the roost. Composer **Paul Schütze** puts the case for a total cinematic fusion of music and vision.



Trent Reznor

any ambition to be a singer until after I came to New York and I started hanging around at CBGB's and Max's. At first I wanted to make it on the jazz scene, but after a year or two I came to the realization that was not going to happen.

Were the musicians very cliqueish?

Yes, very much so, except for Luther [Thomas] and some of the people from St Louis like Joe Bowie and Bobo Shaw, they accepted me but most of the others did not. I sat in with those St Louis guys, I didn't actually do any gigs with them. I had a jazz group, young white guys who had played loft gigs, but I could tell my whole personality was the antithesis of what people on the jazz scene would accept.

That was John Coltrane.

All that shouting really intrigued me. It was sort of humorous. I never would have guessed that was Coltrane. When I had my first success with The Contortions, for a while I turned totally against jazz, I didn't want to be identified with it, I didn't want to play it. But around B4, B5 I got a little burned out on the whole funk thing and I started listening to jazz again, but more traditional things, like singers. I started wanting to play jazz, but more traditional type things, ballads. I wanted to play those kind of tunes from the beginning, but I had a lot of anger against all these jazz musicians. I was like they rejected me but when they saw the success I was having they turned around and imitated me.

When you fused free jazz and funk, the likes of *M-Base* didn't exist.

I don't want to name names! I have nothing against the musicians for doing it. I was amused. The original Contortions was a bit scarier because I'd run into the audience and start attacking them, literally. When we first started playing a lot of our audience was from SoHo. New York, very arty-type people and they had a real above-it-all attitude. That's what bugged me about punk in New York from the beginning: the clubs didn't have any dancefloors and nobody danced, they stood around. Where I come from in Milwaukee, everybody would dance, that was a big part of it. These people would not respond in any physical way, so I decided I would make them do it. It got out of hand: people were coming to beat me up. I got this whole weird violent vibe. It doesn't really have any more. I try to have a bit of that in there, but I don't have any interest in starting fights anymore. I replaced it with I dance a lot more now.



JOHNNY "GUITAR" WATSON

"Witchcraft" from *I Cried For You* (Chess)

That's an old song called "Witchcraft," a standard. I like that singer. I don't think it's him, but he reminds me

a bit of George Forme, he's a big favourite of mine. It's off centre. Is it a recent thing?

No, 60s.

Johnny "Guitar" Watson.

Oh, wow.

But it's his cocktail album — he doesn't play a note of guitar on it.

I didn't know he did one. Wow! It's great. What label is it on? I like stuff that has a cocktail vibe, but not too slick. He sings a little off centre, I try to do that too, though I don't have much choice, my singer's going to be off centre no matter what I do. My favourite thing to do is ballads, standards. If it was my own choice I'd do a whole show of just that. If you're going to do it in 1996 you've got to do it a little different. I really like looking for songs that relate to my life, I try to avoid the overworked ones.

THE CRAMPS

"Pinkie Blues" from *Look Mom No Head* (Big Bear)

It sounds like a band from maybe Texas or the South. It's two singers. They're white?

It's The Cramps with Iggy Pop guesting.

Oh, really? I thought it was older, something from the late 60s or early 70s. I heard their first gig, their audition at CBGB's. I was at all their early gigs. I was a really big fan of theirs. Back when they had that guitarist Bryan Gregory, he was really a wild guy. Some of your bands don't have any concept of all that kind of stuff. The young of the early Contortions gigs were opening for The Cramps.

ARCANA

"Rattle Of Bones" from *The Last Wave* (DfW)

This is a little wandering for me. I like some of the sounds, but I like things that have a little bit of a groove to them. Sounds like it might be one of those people associated with the Knitting Factory or something.

It's Derek Bailey, with Bill Lawwell and Tony Williams.

Have you come across Bailey?

Yes, I used to listen to his records with Anthony Braxton. I like some of the sounds, but his stuff seems incoherent, it doesn't build. I like something that establishes an emotional atmosphere and the doesn't really do that. It's a little too like random sounds. [Listens awhile] This part I like better, after the drums came in. Sounds a little bit like "Comfort Yourself" to me. This part I like, I still find Derek Bailey... He does have a very original style, but it seems very dry to me a lot of times. This part I like, it's getting better. Is this a recent thing? I love the Miles Davis stuff from the 70s, like *Get Up With It*, and there aren't many people who have gone on in that vein. This is like that. I like this part. [Listens some more] I spoke too soon about Derek Bailey, this part I really like a lot. It did really build really well, it started out quiet, then this is like a nice crunching noise thing. I like it a lot.

JOHNNIE RAY

"Cry" (Okeh 7")

[Immediately before Ray has even started singing] Johnnie Ray! I love Johnnie Ray. People don't take him seriously as a singer at all, people just think of him today as a freak. I think he's one of the greatest singers of all time. This biography of him came out, and he really had an incredible life. He was deaf, he was gay, bisexual, he was an alcoholic. Before Elvis he was the first white

singer to take black rhythm 'n' blues and have a mass success with it, because he was as big as Elvis was. That was in '52, '53. It wasn't rock 'n' roll, more of a pop vein. Later on Mitch Miller was his producer at Columbia and he tried to tone down the whole black aspect of his style, because he started out working in R&B clubs and all his influences were black. Billie Holiday and a lot of R&B singers. "Whiskey & Get" [covered by Chance on Mokoto Cocktail Lounge] was his first record, he wrote it himself. When it came out, it was on a strictly R&B label, and the distributors refused to believe he was white and refused to believe he was a man. He has incredible emotion in his singing, but most of his records are out of print now and the ones you find are not the best ones. He ended up recording a lot of corny stuff. I've got some records of Johnnie singing standards like "All Of Me" and "Don't Blame Me" and he really does them well. He was much more of a jazz-influenced singer than most people realise, he just didn't get too many opportunities to record that way.

There's a lot more jazz in American pop than people brought up on The Beatles realise.

That's really true. Pop music in the 30s and 40s was basically jazz, just watered down, but there was always a real corny side of it, too.



ORNETTE COLEMAN

"Voice Poetry" from *Body Meta* (Artists House) [Silence]

What's your first reaction?

That's a strange record.

That's like a jazz version of

Bo Diddley. Who is this?

Ornette Coleman with Prime Time.

Okay. Is this [gestures] *Born Not*? Is this a new record?

It's from 1976. It came out right after *Dancing in the Street*.

I haven't heard that many of your records. I like this a lot better than a lot of their stuff I've heard. To me, if you're going to use a funk thing it needs a strong beat. A lot of Prime Time I've heard is too in-between, it's not quite funk and it's not quite jazz and it leaves me unsatisfied. The whole thing of two bass players and two drummers doesn't leave a lot of space. I like music which has space in it. A lot of people, their ears are tuned to Western harmony. When they hear something that's outside that, it really bothers them because they can only think of one way of playing music. The Western concept of harmony has nothing to do with 95 per cent of music in the rest of the world.

You wouldn't expect the Wild Man of No Wave to be a World Music aficionado.

I love traditional African music and Middle Eastern music, but it's just an observation. My influences are pretty much from American music. When I do things in a style I keep it purely in that style: when I do funk it's funk, when I do jazz it's jazz. A lot of people combine all these influences and end up with something that's just watered down and that's the last thing I want. □

charts

Playlists from the outer limits of planet sound

Sharp As A Needle 15

Deanne Day — The Long First Friday (Emissions Audio Output)
Fløgvas — Summer (Love Train)
Blowpipe — Kucuo (Needlework)
Schlammpeitziger — Freundlichbaracadamelodegedut (A-Musik)
Cornershop — Butter The Soul (Wijaya)
Various — Heat2 (Mid Wax)
The Feminine Complex — Hide And Seek (Wurlitzer Jukebox)
Miles Davis — Get Up With It (Columbia/Sony Jazz)
Rachel's — Rhine & Courtesan (Quarterstick)
Dakota Suite — Blue 7 (Arms)
Ghostface Killah — Ironman (Epic)
Earth & Stone — Kool Roots (On-U Sound)
Drone — Turn & Twist (V-Chi)
Oumou Sangaré — Dyorolen (World Circuit)
Atari Teenage Riot — Rot 1996 (DHR/Grand Royal)
 Compiled by John Kennedy, Sharp As A Needle, RYM Radio
 103.8 FM (South London), Sundays 9pm-12 30am

Fat Cat 15

Fixa — Very Well Organized (Che)
Paul W Teelbrooke — Nova (Op Art)
Pala Calico — Llanga (Warp)
Tricky — Ghetto Youth (4th & Broadway)
Spymania Allstars — Airt (Spymania)
Transient Waves — Heron Jam (Mind Expansion)
Concept 09 — 09/96 (Concept)

Various — United Mutations (Lo Recordings)
Ken Ishii — Overlap (Lemon D Remix) (R&S)
Tipsey — Nude On The Moon (Asphodel)
Fusion — Never Forget It (Planet E)
Jeff Mills — Very EP (Axis)
See-Feel — CH-Vox (Rephlex)
Eight Miles High — Two (Nonono)
Sokol — Mean Clown Welcome (Cheap)
 Compiled by Dave Cowley, Fat Cat, 19 Earham St, London WC2

Wired For Sound 15

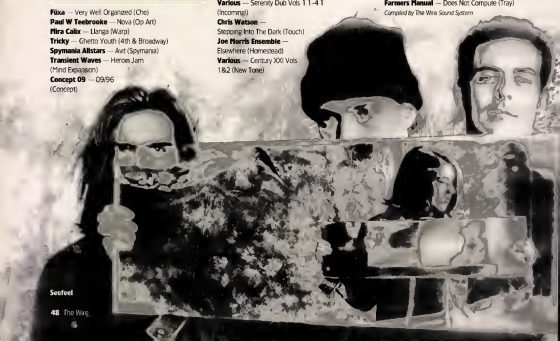
Sun Ra — The Singles (Evidence)
Morton Feldman — Only (New Albion)
Mark Wirtz — A Teenage Opera (RPM)
Philip Glass — Music In Twelve Parts (Elektra Nonesuch)
David Tudor — Three Works For Live Electronics (Lovely Music)
Tetsu Inoue — World Receiver (Instruct)
Steve Roach/Stephen Kent/Kenneth Newby — Halcyon Days (Fathom)
Hoven Drown — Grov (Xsource)
Frank Zappa — Lather (Rykodisc)
Various — Serenity Dub Vols 1-4-1 (Incoming)
Chris Watson — Stepping Into The Dark (Touch)
Joe Morris Ensemble — Elsewhere (Homestead)
Various — Century 100 Vols 1&2 (New Tone)

Anthony Braxton — Composition No 173 (Black Saint)
National Health — Missing Pieces (East Side Digital)
 Compiled by Chris Meloch, Wired For Sound, ONRM-FM
 London, Ontario, Canada, Mondays 11am

Office Ambience

Amor Tobin — Creatures EP (Ninja Tune)
UHO — Undenotified Musical Object (Liquid Sky)
Various — Message From The Tribe (Universal Sound)
Ghost — Lama Rabi Rabi (Drag City)
Various — United Mutations (Lo Recordings)
Tom Reichen — Chaotica (Bardman)
Spymania Allstars — Airt (Spymania)
Various — This Music Is Silent Until You Listen (Decus)
Roscoe Mitchell — Sound (Delmark)
Karlheinz Stockhausen — Gesang Der Junglinge (Stockhausen Verlag)
Various — Avantgardism (Blue Angel)
Id Battery — Lily Events (Unique Ancient Tavern)
AMM — From A Strange Place (PSF)
Hoebeus/Neumeier/Engler — Other Places (Captain Trip)
Farmers Manual — Does Not Compute (Tray)
 Compiled by The Wire Sound System

See-Feel



sound check

Under the soil: December's selected CDs, albums and LPs



Noise analysts: Masonna reviewed page 57

Luciano Berio The Complete Works For Solo Piano

NEW ALBION NA 089 CD

John White Piano Sonatas

NMC 0038 CD

The difficulty of making comparisons between works of music reminds me of Paper, Scissors, Stone — the playground game in which scissors cut paper, stone breaks scissors and paper wraps around stone. One piece can always sound brighter, faster, more complex, more funky than another, but simple A or B choices are never the whole story. Both of these collections are expertly played — by David Arden

on the Berio CD, and Roger Smalley on the White — good value and full of creativity (though they're not exactly great albums). Berio must be 'paper' — a richly decorated Italian manuscript, but I can't decide whether White is 'stone', or a crafty pair of garden shears.

The Berio disc is a good one for completists — all his piano works including a revised version of the ground-breaking *Sequenza IV* and a neo-classical student work from 1947 that will make student composers feel pretty sick. The relatively recent *Lutblower* and *Feuerklavier* provide an interesting blend of 1950s 12-tone flash with a more vivid sense of colour. *Lexi*, *Bon* and *Erdenkloster* demonstrate Berio's personal version of Minimalism — three little pieces that tease the notes

of a single chord

White's music can appear plain, which baffles many musicians on first encounter, but the work is quietly ambitious, the layers of meaning and delight go beyond the notes on paper. And his is a huge body of work: this CD contains only 18 of his 131 piano sonatas. You feel you could analyse just one piano miniature and discover a whole sub-molecular system, a jumping universe within White's quirky musical world. Ian Gardiner has made wonderful orchestrations of some of them for George W. Welch. The later, more rhythmic sonatas include No 108 — a spectacular tango, which Year Mikhashoff commissioned for his famous marathon performances at the Alameda and elsewhere. No 95, the unsettlingly

Reviewed this month

Muhal Richard Abrams

AMM **Amon Düül 2** Luciano

Berio **Björk** James Bang

Rudiger Carl & Hans

Reichel Cosmic Comroads

David Cunningham & Peter

Gordon DoppelMoppel

Endemic Void Fluxa Galactic

Explorers Gamelan Semar

Pagutinger Gate Gateway

Philip Glass Golem Tom

Hamilton Hillard Ensemble

Icebreaker/Michael Gordon

The Japanese/American Nose

Treaty Joseph Jarman

Thomas Koner Labradford

Lull Macro Dub Infection 2

Masonna The Miracle Of

Levitation Roscoe Mitchell

MLO Moebius, Neumeier &

Engler Music With No Name

Dr Octagon One Inch Punch

Bob Ostertag Evan Parker

James Plotkin Prince Paul

Rome Seely Storm Of Drones

Sun Ra Swans United

Mutations David S Ware

Patty Waters Weather

Report John White plus

electronica and new jazz

releases in brief

Björk

Telegram

ONE LITTLE INDIAN TUP \$1 CD/HOLP

After Post, Telegram. And then, possibly maybe, Fax, followed by *E-Mix*, and (finally) a return to acoustic basics. *Cover Age* isn't worth hoping, of course, because somehow it — that is, the proliferation of Björk — seems to have happened already. Essentially the remix album for *Post*, her second solo release, *Telegram* follows hot on the heels of a triple-CD pack of "Possibly Maybe" mixes. I remember double-CD packs of previous Björk singles, seven mixes of "Big Time Sensuality." All magnificent stuff — Björk is the best thing to come out of Iceland since Brenninn-Móls Saga and the weirdest lyricist since the *Hövsamál* — but one can't help feeling, sometimes, that one's only just absorbed the latest Björk when another one appears.

These aren't complaints but the product of a certain wonderment at the speed of Björk's infinite variety. For the past 15 years or so, remixes have presented themselves as viable strategies in as much as they are, like their forebears, variations on a theme. Their existence revolves as much around an existing text, as it displays the text and character of another — which is to say, that to be remixed is to surrender (at the least) a portion of one's control. In practice, and *Telegram* is a case in point, the original artist's presence is rarely entirely dispensed with, even on the "Headphones" track, a truly out-there voiceless soundscape from Panasonic's Mika Vainio which makes even Tricky's original seem too-woolly cluttered. *Telegram* is the product of, perhaps, some two-way admiration societies. Björk commissioned remixes from a collection of performers, including LFO. The Brodsky Singing Quartet, percussionist Evelyn Glennie (there giving "My Spine," the album's only



non-*Post* song, a virtuoso flourish with an exhaust pipe solo), Deadcat and Jungla Dillija. Once delivered, she recorded new vocals to suit the tracks, making the album more collaborative than remixes usually are.

There are some departures, "Headphones" and Dillija's "Cover Me" being the most startling, and, considering their comparative (vocal) silence, the bravest. The Brodskys bring a very new type of dynamism to "Hyperballad," their phrasing and depth of field giving the song a more sombre colouring. Elsewhere, LFO's "Possibly Maybe" and Outcast's "Enjoy" fully exploit Björk's breathy urgency. "You've Been Flirting Again" still sounds like a version of Nina Simone's "Four Women," while the rap additions on Döbl's mix of "I Miss You" seem straightforward in comparison to everything else.

LOUISE GRAY

Earth Wind & Fire or Roy Ayers 20 years ago, with an occasional reggae baseline moving in and making its presence felt. There's also a live jam feel to cuts, such as the marvellous "Senous Innet", that echoes the percussive-led shows of Ato Monea. The quality and construction, detail and precision of the tracks is quite breathtaking.

JAKE BARNES

Rudiger Carl/Hans Reichel

Buben... Plus
RFP FMP78 CD

DoppelMoppel
Reflections

RFP FMP74 CD

FMP was founded in 1969 by a group of musicians, including Peter Brottmann, Hans Reichel, and Peter Kowald. Run as a collective, it promoted concerts and recordings of European improvised, largely abstract music. Driven by political beliefs as well as by musical ambitions, it seemed an enterprise very much of its time, yet it's still with us, still vigorous, still drawing faithfully to its creed, and it has seen musical and political tides come and go.

The initials pan out equally in German and English, and a friend of mine — less discerning and perceptive than I, of course — refers to Free Music as Fanning-in-a Mikbotte. FMP has comfortably encompassed a fair amount of that over the years, but it's also been responsible for a substantial number of recordings which are superb by any reasonable standards, starting with the still incomparable *Machine Gun* and *For Adolphe Sax*, recordings which actually predated FMP but which remain fundamental to its catalogue and its philosophy.

Buben was added to stock in 1978, and the pieces from that LP have now been interleaved with tracks recorded in July 1994 to make up *Buben... Plus*. Reichel is, of course, a celebrated and brilliant guitarist, but for Buben he reverted to his first instrument, the violin, while Rudiger Carl, best known as a clarinetist and saxophonist, played conchita. On the *Plus* tracks they reveal their prowess on accordion and saxophone, producing lo-tech music, full of ethnic, folksy reference — strange stuff you might hear down at the village

jolly opener, and No 124, *Arpa/waoer Or Disposable Waltz*.

As composers, both men are complete professionals, whose enviable piano-writing techniques are well served by their performers. New listeners might be amazed to learn which man is considered to be the outsider, abused by music critics and ignored by performing institutions. Melodic, honest John lives modestly in Hackney, while lucky Luciano is the one who, internationally feted and heaped with honours, divides his time "between his homes in Florence and the mountain village of Radincondolo".

I'm sure he's earned it. Yet if the Beno CD feels like a historical document, White's may be the low-key start of something new. The time is surely ripe for some big commissions and a proper White album.

JOHN L. WALTERS

James Bong
C'est Très Bong

2 XBOUL TROU 24 CD/LP

Endemic Void
Equations

LANGUAGE WORD 04 CD

James Bong doesn't live up to his dapper moniker. Neither does he sleep himself in spy movie/TI theme nostalgia as the Pussyfoot label did to unremarkable effect on the recent *Pussy Gore* compilation. In fact "he" is a Danish duo, Remmer & Knak. What Bong do is stretch out vast plains of crackling, twisted sound over breaks of varying nature. Like Ninja Tune's DJ Food the duo see no problem in accelerating Hip-Hop beats into drum 'n' bass rhythms, seeing sound and rhythms as homogenous entities to screw with. The influences are drawn from the usual and by now predictable

pool — Hip-Hop, dub, jazz, with a touch of ethnicity thrown in — but there's little tying the pieces together. James Bong suffer from the lack of a central urge to communicate emotion, feeling, narrative or whatever else it is that moves the listener to responsiveness. In the fast expanding and over-populated field of breakbeat music, Bong provide little that is memorable or inventive. Back to base, Bong.

Endemic Void, aka Danney Coffey, does take his chosen field to somewhere new, pushing jazzy Ambient Jungle a step on, and pulling bebop aesthetics into the heart of a swirling breakbeat maelstrom. It's a very refined sound whose sheer politeness makes raw basslines notable by their absence. *Equations* makes no apology for moving into jazz funk territory, and the tunes frequently groove on a bassline and keyboard axis that could have driven

hall if Ambridge twinned with Twin Peaks. Its thin textures and spartan tonalities took a while to get to grips with, but what at first seemed unaccommodating proved to be shot through with a tart whimsy which reminded me of British Summer Time Ends.

Two trombones and two guitars is a combination only slightly less unwinning than concertina and violin. DoppelHoepel (Conrad and Johannes Bauer on trombones, Joe Sachse and Uwe Kropinski on guitars) soon quashed any narrow-minded preconceptions. Recorded in October 1988, these six extroverted pieces still sound fresh and immediate. Full of invention and wit, they have less to do with reflections in the meditative sense than with the kind you'd see in the fairground hall of mirrors or in a tiled surface of water.

BARRY WITHERDEN

Cosmic Corridors

PS-FI PSCD 0001 CD

Galactic Explorers

PS-FI PSCD 0002 CD

Golem

PS-FI PSCD 0003 CD

The myth lives and breathes with the resuscitation of these hitherto utterly obscure examples of Kraut marginalia. A launching pad for these unknown groups was originally provided by Toby Robinson's Pyramel label. Robinson was in Cologne, working for Stockhausen and later Dieter Dierks, borrowing equipment and studio down-time to record the music — hence the assumed names he used for production credits on the results of these moonlighting spells.

After the macrocosmic, synaesthetic, inner space surfing of 60s psychedelia had been road-tested, the macrocosmic infinity beckoned. At the start of the 70s, the denial of Anglo-American rock roots by the best German groups marked out the era. Finding alien worlds out in the ether somewhere was the next step — which is where Cosmic Corridors come in. Recorded in Cologne in 72-73, this quartet's sound is based on repetitive chord sequences played on a (dated but impressively magisterial) Hammond

organ accompanied by eerie falsetto chorales and treated percussion on "Mountainrise", and Pauline Fund's spoken voice on "Niemand Versteht", where tangled guitars rub up against slabs of dissonance. Popul Vuh were charting a fairly similar contemporary path and they scored where the equally impressive Cosmic Corridors sunk without trace.

The cover of the Cosmic Corridors album (Robert Scott students to paint it) is trumped by that of Galactic Explorers' *Epitaph For Venus*. It's a presbly dumb mixture of a so-so Elvis Presley and one of David Allen's Pot Head Pages, surrounded by planets and levitating jellyfish. Also recorded in Cologne circa 72-73, the keyboard trio's music is driven by Tangerine Dream-style sequencers. But whereas that group occasionally improvised amiably over their rhythmic patterns, Galactic Explorers music is more spartan and low key, with the drones and rhythm pulses infused by noodling synths, organs, Fender Rhodes and heavily reverberated cymbals and gongs. It's a quintessential growler, revealing itself in time as a veritable analogue bubblebath.

Golem were a different beast altogether, although the track titles ("Stellar Launch", "Jupiter And Beyond") are as Kosmosic as the rest. The look-twice production and composing credit here is Genius P. Orndge (sic), another of Robinson's aliases. *Oron Awakes* is organic, jazz-tinged space-rock with funky Hammond organ, massive wah-wah bass and a guitarist who mixes shuddering Sonic Boom-style guitar treatments with plenty of wah-ish. In their sprawling sonic forays they sound uncannily close to Gal De Sac at times.

Robinson lost money on these solo-label projects, but he should be saluted for birthing such disparate records. What else is lurking out there in the kosmos?

PIKE BARNES

David Cunningham

PIANO SOTS CD

Peter Gordon & David Cunningham

PIANO SOTS CD

Cunningham's Piano label is rapidly turning into one of the most fecund

sources of new old music in the CD marketplace. Mostly devoted to airing unheard and remixed archive material, it's a fabulous piece of self-publicity which shows Cunningham to be one of the most remarkably active musical minds around. True, he may be given to ponderous didacticism of the most grotesque kind in his sleeve notes (learned on *The Yellow Box* by Gordon's own informal testament to conceiving and creating the recordings). But the jolting effect of actually checking out the dates of many of these works is considerable, it changes our conception of New Music's teleology and often shames many would-be innovators (and their journalistic allies) into submission. Cunningham has been ahead of many people for longer than we think.

The music on *Voceworks* dates from the early 80s (the CD triptych is from 1980) and the late 80s. Most voices are treated, but without always being rendered understandable as human, in the wonderful *Masks And Voices* suite they appear all too human, both as part of a sidestepping, martial rhythmic pattern and as a sumptuous backdrop. Cantor takes that seductive power a stage further. It's delightful, an enveloping and slightly tippy piece of synaesthesia.

The *Yellow Box* also casts a historic trawl-net, incorporating material recorded in London and Geneva between 1981 and 1983, numbering among its collaborators Anton Fier (in his Feebles days), the stalwart John Greaves on bass and David Van Tieghem. It's essential not to simply scoff at it as an artefact but to remember just how innovative this lo-fi and (particularly) plundersophonic music was at the time. As Gordon points out, this was in the antediluvian days of pre-sampling. Trevor Horn was still with Yes, and pop was still post-punking its way through the undergrowth of primitivism — badge-encrusted and peering at any attempt at any kind of studio sophistication, even when it produced music as thorny as this often is the constipated sneer of Gordon's saw over danger-zone harmonic ravings from Cunningham's old tin box of a synth). Then again, there are moments of cool languor and tedious chamber-like textures as in the lovely "Providence", which is only undressed slightly (and rather exorbitantly) by the repetitions of the piece's splendid theme.

PAUL STUPE

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TWO PURE 61 CD

Analogue fetishism is running rife among the movers and shakers who operate largely on the fringes of altrock. Fuxa are a case in point, producing moments of sublime, oscillating beauty via a combination of Moogs, Hammond, bass and laidback percussion. Interestingly, the Detroit duo's varied sound explorations often reach an Ambient plateau similar to that achieved by Future Sound Of London's *Lifetoms*, but from a very different direction. Other comparisons come to mind: the minimalist experimentation to be found on Pete Kernber's *Space Age* label, the quiet intensity of Carl's *Future Days*; even shades of amateur talent nights — the organ on "Pangea" sounds like something to accompany an audience's variety turn. This is generally lighter sounding than the 3 Field Rotation collection released earlier this year, and perhaps lacks some of the intensity and focus deployed there, but there are some strikingly effective moments of experimentation.

Seely's debut draws immediate comparisons with Stereolab with its multi-part harmonies and undulating rhythm tracks. This is only half the story though, as the ghost of indie past looms large: think C85-era NME groups, but with actual technique. Some of this is really quite good — "Pleasant Shower", "Sealark", "Wind & Would" — and some of it people would have bailed for at second-hand record shops in 1985. Sometimes the two- and three-part harmonies reach a sort of cloying quality that smother the rest of the music, or conversely lend it an otherworldly that jars with the more solid instrumental backing. Tellingly, the instrumental track, "Post Sap Pass Street & So On", is one of the standouts on the album, where Seely's more whimsical tendencies are kept in check with electronic pulses and a bassline that threatens to become funky. A little more rhythmic inventiveness would rescue the group's tendency to dig trenches with an over-reliant use of plain guitar strumming to carry the songs along.

TORI RIDGE

Gate

Monolake

TABLE OF THE ELEMENTS 36 KRYPTON CD

The title *Monolake* conjures up a tableau that is paradoxically massive, inert, translucent and pocked by waves. The Dead C's Michael Monley traverses this viscous sediment as Gate, navigating its information topography with quotidian ease. As a guitarist he undertakes a leap of faith similar to that of rugged individualists Kev Hano and Bobbetomagus's Donald Miller, restoring devotion to his archaic instrument's electric-threat through the organic mutation of meta-volume and lethal distortion. A low-tech delay-pedal-as-phantom-turbine is his most ubiquitous processor, its orbital mechanics spin backdrops of opaque fall-out, or isolate and lift mirrored fragments out of the mix. An analogue synth vibrates oblique planes of sound, releasing cryptic vapours and short-wave hallucinations that often buffer monstrous guitar-scapes. Songs become dust, dispersed by the mercurial rhythm of undulating mirages.

Such horizon-dwelling magnitude finds its earthly metaphor in the desert. Most of the tracks on *Monolake* were recorded only days after a performance of the 94 *Gate/Fast/Hano* US tour at Desolation Canyon, Death Valley — the hottest and lowest point in the Western hemisphere (the foreword cover photo was taken by Monley from one of its cardinal plateaus). Knowledge of this scenario invests *Monolake* with the trajectory of a road-trip into an enormous kingdom of sun, sand, depth and distance. The opening "Standing In Fields" pivots on a loop from The Rolling Stones' "Sway", echoing Charlie Watts's stentorian flits against the impermeable ether of Monley's Crazy Horse-inflected squall. It's as if the defective radio of a speeding



convertible had frozen on a momentary classic-rock transmission, a harsh wind smearing the cycling snippet against passing dunes. Revolving guitars, shimmering static, and dripping bass notes apple the oasis of "To Kas The Wolf", epitomising the fleeting relief of quenched thirst in oppressive heat. The sun-poisoned delirium of "The Hero Tree" is fractured by the statuesque corrosion of "Sonora Purring", with Monley directly referring to the desert's omnipotence in lyrics, feedback and strangled notes. He finalises the odyssey by accompanying, augmenting and ultimately overwhelming Fast's "Jennifer", reducing it to a shadow-play on the blinding screen of the desert sky.

SEAN MOORE

**Gamelan Semar
Pagulingan**

Musik From Bali

WELLSIRUS SP/281 1609 CD

There's been a lot of imitation gamelan around since Claude Debussy first heard the music at the 1889 Paris Exhibition. A recent *Musica* masters disc of orchestral and piano pieces by Colin McPhee, the gamelan pioneer, shows how much is lost without the resources of the wonderful percussion ensemble Misaena, Britten, Xenakis and Reich, astonished by the richness and complexity achieved by so-called "folk" musicians, absorbed the influence in a subtle way.

But *Musik From Bali* is the real thing. Gamelan has not been a static form. Javanese musicians incorporated the military band instruments of Dutch colonialists into their ensembles. During this century, an exuberant dance style called *kerawit* swept the island of Bali

(the small eastern neighbour of Java) in contrast to the slow and stately court gamelan; *kerawit* has dramatic stops and starts, with more dynamic contrast and rhythmic complexity.

Though the poorly-translated Welmslusk sleeve note isn't too clear on this — or on much else — the Gamelan Semar Pagulingan is a kind of court gamelan. The music of this group is instrumental, not designed to accompany a dance, but their joyous style must have been influenced by the *kerawit*. As Neil Sorrell notes in his useful *Guide To The Gamelan*, it's the set of instruments, housed in a special place, that has a personality, while the identity of the players is less important. But the sleeve-note does tell us that the leader here is Gusti Naurah Suyasa, when he's not leading the ensemble, he's the local bus driver. He drives his musicians through four long and delightful compositions.

When you listen behind the obvious melodic patterns highlighted by the metallophones and curious quavering flutes, the rhythmic interplay of the percussion becomes captivating. Sorrell believes that "Alien forms do not stay alien very long. The exotic does not exist except on travel posters". But the gamelan is still alien to us, and without immersion in its mysteries the listener can only guess at the expressive power of the music. Its charm, though, is immediate. This recording is rather special, and unlike many recordings on location, the sound quality is excellent.

ANDY HAMILTON

**Gateway
In The Moment**

EQN 1574 CD

The stellar '70s fusion line-up of Gateway — John Abercrombie (guitar), Dave Holland (bass) and Jack

DeJouettie (drums) — was reformed last year for Homecoming. The trio had made a niche for itself with a rather austere kind of chamber jazz, and the follow-up *In the Moment* is an album mostly of small gestures and emotional compass, even more so than earlier efforts. Compositions are mostly dark and often mournful, delicacy and tastefulness are the hallmarks.

This policy is most keenly down to Abercrombie. Holland and DeJohnette have been involved in some of the most muscular jazz of recent decades, but here the group often seems intent on producing a soundtrack for a film about post-life. The album begins prominently with the raga-sounding title track. Abercrombie seems to have swapped his guitar for a star, despite what the sleeve listing suggests, and the result is attractive. Something of this raga-quality permeates through to "Gruelsen", a mysticno number based on a repeated vamp "The Enchanted Forest" and "Shrubberies" are free explorations but hardly compelling.

Throughout, DeJohnette's percussion effects are a joy — they feature, so we're told, a Kong wave-drum and a Turkish frame drum — and the reverberant, soft-focus ambience is almost too sumptuous. But overall, the album puzzles and disappoints. When Jimmy Giuffrè pioneered his quiet brand of chamber jazz with Paul Bley and Steve Swallow, there was an emotional warmth despite the mostly low-key atmosphere. But in *The Moment*, though sonically a treat, is emotionally undermourned. Often, changes of 'cold intellectuality' in music simply fail to recognise a subtler kind of passion here. I reckon, the charge is on target.

ANDY HAMILTON

Philip Glass

Music In Twelve Parts
ELEKTRA NONESUCH 7559 79324 3CD

Music In Twelve Parts was something that I'd previously only heard, er, in parts. So the only way to approach this release was to tackle it as concertgoers did — in its gargantuan three hours 20 minutes entirety. Peaks of exultation and states of mind bordering on psychosis followed. Written in 1971–74, this was a lengthy and fully realised extemporisation on the limited harmonic angst that Glass put through his complex

rhythmic mill "Part 1" was written for 12 parts, meaning 12 lines of counterpoint, and it was intended to stand on its own as a concert piece. A misunderstanding arose when Glass played it to a friend who equated what the other 11 parts were like. He took on the enormous task of writing them. This is a recent recording (1993) featuring Glass playing keyboards with his ensemble.

Music in Twelve Parts was in many ways Glass's last purely "Minimalist" work before he moved into other areas. The apogee of his later-day approach was reached on recent works like the orchestral/choral opus *Apu*, which is—in terms of the large forces employed and the rather bloody writing—monolithic. But this work is minimalist in length and monolithic in its stature within the Minimalist canon. A Minith, perhaps?

As a listener it's always difficult to reconcile the theory behind this sort of mega composition [that one finds reading through the accompanying booklet] with the physical presence of the compulsive, often beautiful, occasionally maddening music. Essentially, *Musica in Twelve Parts* is presented as an academic musical exercise — or more accurately, an artistic process — reinforced by the dry, typically functional title. Best not to even try to reconcile them at all.

No amount of theoretical pontificating will tell you that on "Part 1", the composer's manipulation of the harmonic and rhythmic raw material give rise to moments of almost hallucinatory beauty. In many ways this is the most satisfactory part, with its shifting web of cadences from the female voice, saxophones and electric organs. "Part Two" has a rushing oriental flavour — an experience akin to putting your head out of a speeding car and hyperventilating as it speeds through Chinatown, New York. Again there is limited incident in the piece but the structure is finely wrought and the changes, when they come, seem massive.

"Part 5", by comparison, is an on-off two-note line of voice, keyboards and saxophones that see-saws in endless metric configurations over keyboard arpeggios. Subjectively, this slips just below the level of what's engaging — especially when compared to "Part 7", a more genuinely hypnotic manipulation of a five-note vocal line, full of left and

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The purity and clarity here — precisely because it's so superficially 'cold' and 'emotionless' — provides for some beautiful, moving music: A landscape or geometric patterns on a mosque wall or a stained glass window ain't got soul as such, but they can still move you. And while we're at it, throw in Marinetti's concept of the beauty of speed, or at least momentum, as well.

"Part 12" was written as a sort of musical joke. As a snook cooked at the prevailing Conservatory dictates that Glass was subjected to in his studies, a twelve note row is discernable in the bass patterns towards the end. But only someone with a questionable sense of humour and a score to hand would roar with laughter. Over its 18 minute duration it sounds like the singer and musicians are careering dizzily round a Moebius loop, with the basic repeated pattern gradually augmented and rhythmically mutated. Glass has commented that when the ensemble make a mistake during rehearsals the effect is like a "trainwreck". Given the astonishing measure of rigidity and fluidity in their playing it's hard to imagine that happening — but it would be arrest to hear one.

MIKE BARNES

Tom Hamilton
Off-Hour Wait State

00 0545 0028 CT

Evan Parker
Synergetics — Phonomanie
III

LEO LRG79040 200

Bob Ostertag
Verbatim

RASTASCAN RECORDS, BPO 029-CD

In his preparations for *Off-Hour What*, State composer Tom Hamilton went down the New York subway and took a couple of train journeys, getting off at each stop, and timing each journey between stations and each wait between trains. He used these timings to provide the structure for an electronic sound environment. In one version the piece exists as an installation, but he also asked a set of musicians to improvise responses to his analogue synth noises. Holding everything together is baritone singer Thomas Buckner, also featured as alto sax (courtesy of Roscoe

Patterns will emerge
(there's no such thing as chance)



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Roscoe Mitchell

Sound
DEL MAR DE 408 CD

Joseph Jarman
As If It Were The Seasons

DEL MAR DE 417 CD

Muhai Richard Abrams

Young At Heart/Wise In Time
DEL MAR DE 423 CD

Three records from the heyday of Chicago's AACM (the Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians), including the very first — Roscoe Mitchell's *Sound*. This was a glowing, revolutionary music that sought to place progressive black music back in contact with a neglected history that stretched back beyond the blues to Africa, as well as absorbing the incredible advances of Ornette Coleman, John Coltrane and others. The movement, in the catalytic presence of Muhai Richard Abrams, was always about the collective, beginning with the struggle to perform music in an atmosphere that was not demeaning and stretching out to become a far-reaching assertion of identity. Essentially, it collared the century's key music and claimed it for its interpreters — and that meant more than musical control; it meant a challenge to the whole mad hotchpotch of images, commerce and status that jazz had become. These days AACM figures such as the members of The Art Ensemble Of Chicago, Anthony Braxton, Henry Threadgill and Leo Smith are still more respected than listened to. 1960s Chicago is covered in jazz histories but the actual music has often been hard to get hold of. In the end, it may be that there is more good music in the fabulous later work of Threadgill, Abrams et al, but that doesn't mean what they did in the 60s is of merely historical value.

Joseph Jarman works on part of *As If It Were The Seasons* with a small trio augmented by the vocals of Sherril Scott. The title piece is a long, slow opportunity for Jarman to work with various wind instruments in



front of a typically Chicagoan backdrop of shuffling percussion. Scott joins in as the piece segues into "Song To Make The Sun Come Up", which is mainly carried by the pungent alto of Jarman and the crisp drumming of Thurman Barker. The group are joined by a further six musicians (including Fred Anderson, John Stuebel and Muhai Richard Abrams) for "Song For Christopher", a piece based on incomplete notations by pianist Christopher Gaddy who'd featured in Jarman's quartet until he died in spring 1968. It's the real meat of the album. It begins with a mournful Jarman intro, but when the melody breaks through it's a huge, uplifting thing, which breaks up into very fine and heated free-blowing, at some remove from the hubb of much AACM work.

The Muhai album, recorded in 1969 at around the time The Art Ensemble, Braxton and others decamped to Paris, opens with a 30-minute solo

piano piece. It's a brooding, beautiful, slow work, which is quietly radical — revelling around a reflective, consonant centre but digressing wildly. As with much music of the time there's been a lot like it since and it's easy to forget how it must have sounded at the time, but Abrams's always-lucid musicality shines through. "Just flowed from the way I live," he says of the piece. "Wise In Time" is played by a quartet with Leo Smith, Thurman Barker, Henry Threadgill and, on bass, Lester Ashley (who was also a trombonist; he appears on all three of these albums but then dipped out of view). Again the underlying percussion is an unstable backdrop over which the solos are laid. The six minute opening section is a fierce Leo Smith trumpet solo over more great work from Barker. Threadgill has already developed a scolding alto sound, and the Abrams solo is a peculiarly repetitive gem. A terrific record, and you can hear the seriousness and shared intent.

Sound still packs quite a punch at its remove. The way "The Little Suite" touches on blues and marching music and teetering-on-the-brink ensemble chaos is extraordinary. The Chicagoan detachment is there: the piece moves through an amazing range of episodes in even the first three minutes. There was a new way to organise music within the jazz tradition, that was congruent of many styles and able to do in and out at will, rather than making all colours to one mast alone. It almost has the feel of curatorship. "Ornette" (there are two versions on this CD) is a brief and potent homage to the radiating, subversive energy unleashed by Coleman's music, something the Chicagoans would apply on many levels. Malachi Favors on bass is already sounding mind-bendingly different. "Sound" itself is presented in two versions — the original issue was a composite. There had been nothing quite like this: a slow-paced series of (often unaccompanied) highly vocal solos with a shared tempo and range but no other link. The piece works through the collective voice as it carries forward, becoming a joint statement with all the stikent anguish of the blues.

WILL MONTGOMERY

Mitchell, shakuhachi, trombone and percussion

Knowing that there is some relation to real-time events seems neither here nor there, the structure may have humdrum origins, but Hamilton has managed to create powerful impressions of motion and stasis. Buckner, the passenger, is not a customer. He drifts along achieving some sort of heroic boredom. Much of the motion of the piece is sustained by the shifts in the dreaming state he seems to lock into. Otherwise, movement is never expressed through percussive regularity, more the swish

and gurgle of 1980s synth sounds. Some of these verge on the chilly, but more often the piece has a living and vital throbb, suspended between the feeling of being at the mercy of a system and the vibrant interventions of the improvisers. Of these, Mitchell and Ralph Samuelson, on shakuhachi, make the strongest impression. The piece has a surprisingly warm feel to it. It's not about the fear of the city dweller, more about the confusions of daydreaming underground.

There are quite different encounters between improvisers and electronics on

the Leo release. In his sleeve note Evan Parker discerns a strand which emerged in freely improvised music during the 1980s that has to do with the various ways in which musicians from diverse cultures became interested in each other's methods. This double set, taken from live recordings made at a festival organised in Austria by Parker in 1993, features a group of nine musicians. Traditional instruments from Korea, South Africa, Tuva and Sardinia are juxtaposed with electronics, saxophone, bass and trombone. Parker appears on six of the 19 tracks, which involve the musicians in

various ad hoc groupings. A key presence is George Lewis, particularly with his extraordinarily flexible Voyager computer program. Not for the first time, it points up the lack of exposure he's had. The album is bursting with provocative encounters. Lewis with bassist Motoharu Yoshizawa, Parker with Korean-American komungo player Jin Hi Kim, Sarinbo Nemchyuk with the bagpipe-like Sardinian launedas of Carlo Mariani. Mariani dominates the album's two longest pieces — rousing performances with six and seven musicians apiece which fail to bridge the gap between tradition

and freedom. It would have been good to hear more of the electronics of Italians Walter Prati and Marco Vecchi — their meeting with South African percussionist Thebe Lere and Samkele Ntshayile is a textual feast.

Bob Ostertag's *Say No More* project presents another quite different meeting between technology and improvisation, with sampling being the key element. *Say No More* is an adventure in the way of sound. For the project's first instalment Ostertag got vocalist Phil Minton, percussionist Gerry Hemingway and bassist Mark Dresser to record solo improvisations which he blew apart and reconfigured in the computer. The group then learned the recomposed piece and performed it live. On *Verbom* Ostertag explodes the live tapes and puts them back together in new shapes. A live version of *Verbom* will complete the project. So it's a work in which re-configured improvisations become "compositions" and the idea of authorship receives a many-layered going over. Fascinating (and no, you can't dance to it) but, as ever, the proof is in the pudding. It's a deeply disorientating listen, throwing into question considerations of who, what, when and why, and all the mini-narratives of group performance. The ebb and flow in the project between performance and re-composition really does throw into question one's ways of listening. One piece, "Cornflower", with a strangled Minton sample revolving over typically sharp Hemingway percussion, is an example of how potent this method could be. Elsewhere it is by turns enthralling and frustrating — at its best when sounds are allowed space to repeat, but often steering dangerously close to the panned "so what?" question

WILL MONTGOMERY

The Hilliard Ensemble A Hilliard Songbook: New Music For Voices

ECM NEW STORES 1614/15 2CD

Few songs truly explode out of the speakers, grab you from the first moment and hold you until long after the last note has needed into silence, and most of the few that do are renewed up by loudly amplified guitars and screams (of Sonic Youth and Lydia Lunch's "Death Valley 69"). The opening impact of James MacMillan's "Here In Hiding" is all the more remarkable, then, for being composed for just the four Hilliard voices. Preceded by a fragment of Gregorian chant, MacMillan's piece kicks in on a startling crescendo of a four-part vocal chord, which immediately disintegrates/integrates into the several lines of musical and theological inquiry pursued by the individual voices, as they endeavour to restore that first, strangely cacophonous moment of harmony. If nothing else on this generous double CD collection achieves the same level of impact as MacMillan's voice-blast, it nevertheless amply rewards the Hilliards' commitment to New Music.

What's great about the Hilliards' recordings is how the combination of ECM's precise production values and the ensemble's arrangements can locate, say, Gesualdo's *Tonewood* and no end of medieval religious songs in a contemporary music tapestry that takes in Jan Garbarek, György Kármán and Herz Holger elsewhere, and, on this set, Barry Guy, Morton Feldman (a lovely sitting for tenor of a Rilke poem) and Arvo Part. But coming just after MacMillan's RC, vocalist, Part's two pieces have a PC austerity that

leaves me questioning why so much modern devotional music feels it has to prostrate itself so slavishly before its chosen God. Likewise, it's slightly disappointing that many of the younger composers set biblical or literary texts, rather than compose new lyrics for the Hilliards to sing. But Barry Guy's cut-up of MacMillan ("Un Coup De Dés") and Elizabeth Luddy's folding together of a Jonah hymn and a passage from *Moby Dick* to create "Whale Rant" provide the singers with, respectively, jaggedly playful and playfully solemn settings. Contrary to Einstein's claim that God does not play dice, MacMillan, by way of Barry Guy, argues that "every thought gives off a dice throw", bringing chance into play. Sadly, the most overtly religious songs here, Part's especially, confirm that God plays the universe with loaded dice. But even non-believers might bow in awe before the Big Bang beginning of MacMillan's opening chord

BIBA KOFF

Icebreaker/Michael Gordon

Trance

ARGO 452 418 CD

How do you reinvent the big ensemble — and the big misterwork — in this wonderfully confusing age of instant-gratification electronics and individualistic performers? Musicians still want to play together and composers still have ambitions to write long pieces, but how can the old models be made to work, or new models get going, when a high-tech synthesizer or guitar rig can apparently compete, in volume and cost-effectiveness, with dozens of musicians? The Charlie Barber Band, Regular Music II, Steve Martland's group and Icebreaker are a few of the brave

ensembles tackling this question, while better-funded chamber orchestras, such as Ensemble Modern and The London Sinfonietta, are finding an expanded purpose in life with imaginative programming and the addition of key non-classical players that help turn them into "third stream" jazz orchestras.

Terminal Velocity, Icebreaker's first album, suggested the breadth of their Dutch-inspired big-ensemble vision, with adventuresome pieces by David Lang and Gábor Bolyai, as well as the outstanding *Evol* by group member Damian Le Gassick. Trance, unfortunately, narrows it down. There's a gritty sound to the group that can make its predominantly tonal repertoire as hard on the ear as old-fashioned atonality. Their combination of twangy electric basses and guitars, keyboards, percussion, amplified winds, strings and accordion provides a tough job for the sound mixer. The group has clearly relished the chance to spend more time recording and mixing the album, which is taken up entirely by Michael Gordon's magnum opus — a non-stop, 50 minute workout for all the usual Icebreaker noses, augmented by a hefty brass section and a bunch of samples for the "drone" section.

The transitions between movements are impressive and the clear mix enables the listener to figure out the extensive rhythmic permutations of Gordon's thematic material. In this respect, the piece reminded me of middle period Philip Glass. I imagine that Trance could have a great impact live, and since much modern "serious" music relies on instant first-performance reaction to survive, it will probably cause a bit of excitement in concert halls where the sound system is good enough. Repeated listening on CD is less rewarding. The relentless repetitions and the pounding, unreluctant



soundcheck

rhythms (like Glass's disappointing Powapow soundtrack in places) mean that it risks sounding like Prog rock without a drum kit.

The best examples of repetitive music, when expertly composed and realised, do create a trance-like effect in listeners, a chemical virtual-image music. The title of Gordon's piece implies a kind of unconscious simplicity, but it's a monomer. This is just another complex, worked-out piece that goes on for too long.

JOHN I. WALTERS

Thomas Köner
Nunatak Gongamur
BAROON BAROON CD

AMM

From A Strange Place
PSP PSCDD CD

Two outsider documents of disorientating drone-drift and soundpaths less travelled.

The Thomas Köner release (a rescue) is another result of the German composer's now well-documented investigations into the sound-properties of dose-injected gongs, and it's an unearthly soundworld of slow eruption and eternal percussive delay. The gong-strikes blow outwards with the slow expansion of smoke clouds, creating a genuinely desolate feel which is echoed in the beautiful cover — a lonesome column of sledges being dragged across a vast white and icy expanse. Köner's reverberations can't be described as Ambient, strictly speaking — there's little sense of the organic, and more attention to the result of conscious sound manipulation in his work. It's this marginal human presence which lends the hermetic, alienated and lonely atmosphere of Nunatak Gongamur its resonance.

This is music which doesn't fall back on the easy luxury of being merely self-referential, rather each sound implies an awareness of the outside world, if not necessarily an embracing of it. Perhaps Köner's work is best understood as a desire to communicate in human terms, always underpinned by an acknowledgement of the isolation of individualism and the impossible gulfs between people.

It is in this realm that he compares most readily to AMM music, especially



Prince Paul
Psychoanalysis (What Is It?)
WOLFSOUND WSCD CD

Dr Octagon
Instrumentalist
HOT WAX WMOGA CDLP

Two albums to drive you up the wall and, in the first instance, take you down again.

Prince Paul made his name producing and making sense of De La Soul's frankly idiotic take on HipHop before working as part of The Gravediggaz, another offbeat HipHop crew that included The Wu Tang. Gail's phenomenal producer The RZA. His solo album is as eclectic, smart and dynamic as you might hope, covering HipHop instrumentals, NuM Bass ("Booty Clap"), regga dub ("Vexual Healing") and

even a comedy routine. The whole snoring is tied together by the narrative of a stereotypical continental shrink, barking out his tight-lipped prognoses of your mental ill health.

It's Paul's compositional ability with HipHop that stands out the best. He draws out its sparkling classical elements, making great use of the piano to develop an uplifting sound best exemplified on the intoxicatingly beautiful "You Made Me (AKC)", which shines with the brightness of midsummer sunlight. A cover of Schoxy D's "Park Side Killers" adds to the record's ingenuity, as does "Vexual Healing", which echoes the dub tradition of the album's Brooklyn-based label Wordbound.

The other strong element is the humour. A lewd, raucous sense of parody bubbles throughout, making the lyrics to a blues pastiche ("The Bitch Blues") as nasty as they could be. The comedy is taken to a further height by "The World's A Stage (A Dramedy)", a studio-created comedy act by one of Paul's amusing friends, complete with fake crowd reaction.

Dr Octagon, the Mr Hyde alias of rapper Kool Keith, is anything but funny. The first Dr Octagon album was released just a few months ago. Instrumentalist is the same album minus the raps, more-or-less, and has presumably been released to satisfy all those heads out there who only dig beats. To recap, Dr Octagon is Keith's fictional creation — a white doctor who has unnatural urges with a surgeon's knife. He's also from Mars. The album's eerie HipHop soundscapes, the perfect backdrop for Octagon's hellish persona, were created by DJ Q-Bert. On the original the backing tracks bring out the science fiction of Keith's ideas and embed his rambling, articulated anxiety (Keith has had his own real life mental trauma). Standing alone they terrify the pants off you. Without Keith's lyrics to guide the way through the unit labyrinth of beats, off-kilter melodies, twisted basslines and disorientating samples, you become dangerously lost in a nightmare of grotesque proportions. Mad, bad and dangerous to play.

JAKE BARNES

when Keith Rowe's shortwave radio transmissions float through their desperate chaos: broadcasts from the real world breaking through the melancholy sound of distant static, stupefying the music in the here and now, wrenching it from the abstract and at the same time operating as a metaphor for alienated human communication (a concept which Robin Rimbaud has taken to its ultimate conclusion).

On the new AMM recording, the trio of Rowe, Eddie Prevost and John Tibbity are captured on a recent visit to Japan (a tour on which they performed with the likes of Kaji Haino), live at the Egg Farm in Fukaya. It's a fairly sedate affair — Tibbity tinkles at his piano almost absent-mindedly, while Rowe's lightly-sawing guitar and the tumble of Prevost's percussion engage in subtle dialogue. There's a reluctance to impinge on the

initial silence, almost as if Prevost has taken his dictum of "not pushing sounds around" so seriously that he's afraid to actually start playing. It doesn't "speak" as directly as the greatest AMM and lacks the sheer weight, the dense fog of a release like *The Crypt*, never really exploding until three-quarters of the way through. From *A Strange Place* is light, optimistic and — who would have thought? — almost naive. That's some achievement for three people who carry around so much intellectual baggage.

DAVID KEENAN

Labradford
Labradford
BLAST FIRST BFB 136 CDLP

Labradford's third album is their most fully realised collection to date, where the sounds, textures and ideas

developed in previous releases, *Praizon* and *A Stable Reference*, coalesce. Where once the abstract and spacious sound of Labradford's music hid its carefully layered and considered composition, now there's a more audible sense of deliberation present. Not that you're ever likely to confuse this music with the more rhythm-centred end of post-rock, Jammie for instance, or the blissed-out etherality of Windy & Carl for that matter. The world Labradford's music inhabits is very internalised, almost claustrophobic. This ambience isn't about the creation of an imaginary soundtrack, to court a cliché, but more a sense of intensity partially consoled behind a veil of gauze. When moments of dramatic clarity do puncture the veil, they are provided by a sense of shifting mood and texture rather than anything more explicit. "Lake Speed" illustrates

this with its cracked transmissions giving way to swathes of organ and whispered vocals which form a kind of 'souful' impression without resorting to an outright statement of intent. In fact there is an almost epic quality to much of this album as well as a sense of drama, but as if viewed from underwater, where movements are slowed down and impact is muffled.

By holding back and filtering their songs through less obvious channels, Labradford engender a greater sense of engagement in their music than if they had employed more direct means of communication. It's something that isn't necessarily guaranteed to work: it attracts accusations of pretentiousness, and of an unfashionably earnest approach to composition. But Labradford sidestep these issues by virtue of masterful construction and a dark quality to their songs which exist very much in a singular universe. In a sense, Labradford are playing the blues, but in a shade that's all their own.

TOM NISSE

Masonna

Inner Mind Mystique

RELEASE RECORDS RR 6940 CD

Various Artists

The Japanese/American

Noise Treaty

RELEASE RECORDS RR 6930 CD

Various Artists

The Miracle Of Levitation

GENTLE GIANT GGG001 CD

The use of defiantly un-musical materials for the construction of dance rhythm plates is such a commonplace that noise-in-itself is hardly the thrill it once was, when Throbbing Gristle, NON and SPK established noise as a wilfully careless shock tactic to purge late 70s pop of its comfortably po-faced melancholies. Though the Japanese and American noises featured on the Release releases would no doubt dearly love to claim the earlier industrial saboteurs as their inheritance, industrial culture's true heirs operate at the more invasive fringes of Techno, Jungle, Hip-hop and drum 'n' bass. As to the noise-for-noise-as-is faction, they forfeit their right to industrial culture's legacy by too readily approximating its form while ignoring the lines of inquiry it

opened into culture industry practices. Indeed, the contributors to the double CD compilation *The Japanese/American Noise Treaty* immediately disqualify themselves by being so unrelentingly unchallenging of anything except their own right to be.

Well, OK, of course they have that right, and the best of the *Noise Treaty* contributions (all of them Japanese) do manage to establish temporary autonomous zones inside which the creative fire is fierce enough to help you forget the more intruding rhythm 'n' noise experiences occurring elsewhere. Whereas the American side of the pact is name beyond relief (any takers for "I Left My Cock In San Francisco"?), the Japanese contributions at least manifest an awareness of life outside their noise-ghetto, and of how easily rad-art in Japan gets annexed as an unthought-for thrill factor by high art choreographers and fashion designers. In such circumstances Japanese noises have two choices. They can go the American route, quote legitimately claiming stupidity as the ideal prophylactic against anti-industry annexation, or they can raise the noise to a level where it becomes an end in itself and thereafter leaves no traces.

The best of this material, then, is unsurprisingly uglier and louder than the rest. It is also quietly and shamelessly self-obsessed. CCCC derive their noise from the experiences of the former mistress who leads them. For an extraordinarily dynamic solo album, *Inner Mind Mystique*, and on his two compilation contributions, the mad onanist and Madonna fetishist Masonna mixes his own body and throat for the rushes, roars and releases he channels through his severely restricted noise bands. And elsewhere, the disturbed and disturbing noise-vets Incapacitants, Hypokadon and Aube expertly sketch after-shock states of consciousness.

Though *The Miracle Of Levitation* (subtitled *Experimental Sounds From The United States And Japan*) doesn't really belong in this company, the same remarks about 'dance music' nevertheless apply. But once you set aside the fact that the music is nowhere near so 'experimental' as the compilers would have it — that is, the experiments it contains seem happy to confirm ready-made discoveries — there's some fine stuff to be heard here, most of it Otomo

Yoshihide-related, though contributions from Americans James Plotkin, Jim O'Rourke, Liminal and 7,000 Rats also hold up. But Akayama-Sugimoto take the honours with their 19th, going on 21st century roadhouse idiot-guitar stamp "Blues For Prince Myshkin".

BIMA KOPF

Moebius, Neumeier & Engler

Other Places

CAPTAIN TRP CTD-044 CD

Amon Düül 2

Live In Tokyo

MYSTIC MYC CD 107 CD

The woodwork squeals, and out come the Krautrock freaks, blinking in the bright light of the 90s which has suddenly been beamed into their faces by young admirers in the UK, USA and Japan, all of whom want to take them by the hand and lead them up the steps of some hastily erected lofty podium — an honour which was denied them when they were cranking out their finest works back in their homeland during the early 70s.

The Krautrock revival is, as opposed to most other revivals, a fascinating creature that continues to grab at the imagination and push open new doors of exploration rather than simply gnawing on some old bone of nostalgia. It has provided an inspirational base for new groups to grow from, and for old masters of the genre to return to and resume work under the watchful, adoring eyes of a whole new generation.

Other Places features Kluster/Cluster co-founder Dieter Moebius, Guru Guru drummer Hans-Joachim Engler and Die Krupps guitarist Jürgen Engler. The trio's roots may be diverse, but once let loose in a studio for four days they bond together seamlessly, and musical improvisation in its purest and most powerful form is the force that freely flows. This record features nine incredibly powerful cosmic improvisations where each member of the trio is allowed to stamp his personal identity into the mix without detracting from his fellow musician's equally dominant creative presence. The music is lush, complex, brimming with wild, sometimes hilarious, sound ideas that suck in elements of Jungle, dub and Electronica and is bang up to date. At the same time, that defiantly mysterious

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Sun Ra
The Singles

INDIGEO ECD 2154/2CD

Let me put it this way: I am gobsmacked. More than 25 years of collecting Sun Ra records and I had no idea that Saturn, the label run by Ra with his friend Alton Abraham, released all these weird 7" singles. Sun Ra's music always suggested a deeper engagement with the broadest sweep of African-American music. With this release, illusions are confirmed. Finally we hear evidence (and what an appropriate label name that turned out to be) of Sun Ra and the Arkestra working with close harmony vocalists, doo-wop groups, minor and crazed R&B singers, turning out novelty items, seasonal greetings cards, and science fiction stories spanning the eras of Ed Wood Jr. and Steven Spielberg, along with tracks fronted by characters even more eccentric than his own bad self.

Add to that a confirmation in the liner notes that Ra learned with keen interest to Les Baeber's Thermani enched

recordings of the mid-40s and the Mister Ree becomes both clearer and more opaque. As Ra scholar John F. Szwed writes, "the life and music of Sun Ra resist closure."

If you have never listened to a Sun Ra album before, this may not be the place to start (try *Cosmic Tones For Mental Therapy* or *The Magic City*). Of the 49 tracks contained on these two CDs, no recording is better than murky, neither is Ra or his Arkestra captured at their outer limits of cosmic otherness. In a sense, this is audio caution as history lesson. What a history, though.

The lesson begins in Chicago, 1955, with vocal group The Nu Sounds rendering "A Foggy Day" in a straight-faced style reminiscent of The Ravens or The Platters. Sun Ra's minimal piano accompaniment vanishes entirely for an a cappella demo recorded by The Cosmic Rays. Then the fun begins. As a sequence, the singles dislocate time, jumping from doleful doo-wop with a Latin tinge to frenetic, convulsed boogie to shock pop to raw, rent party R&B, all recorded within the space of a few years. Add to this the bizarre fact that Sun Ra would reuse or reuse some of these records many years after they were made, giving no concession to changes in fashion, and you have the sense of a man working with an alternative view of time. Some great novelties have been unearthed: "Teenager's Letter Of Promises," for example, with its lugubriously echoing spoken introduction, or the work of Yochanan, the Sun Man, whose behavioural proximity to Screamin' Jay Hawkins could be compared with the relationship of Esquenta to Little Richard or Wild Man Fischer to Captain Beefheart. That is to say, he was clearly unhinged and barely talented but he sure could shout.

Some of my own favourites here are the later interplanetary experiments with electronic keyboards, "Mayan Temple," a Mini-Mog piece featuring Marshall Allen's oboe, and "Cosmo Extensions," in which Ra blazes an unidentified synthesizer into the outer darkness. Taped for posterity in kitchens, living rooms, clubs, hotel rooms, even recording studios, these tracks peel off another layer of the infinite onion who called himself Le Sony'r Ra. Who was that masked man? We will never truly know.

DAVID TOOP

aura that surrounds the best of their own music remains intact. If Krautrock is to have a future beyond beat then this is surely what it's going to sound like.

Amion Duul 2 is also on the comeback trail in a big way, with the group members being heralded as gods in Tokyo when their tour motherland landed there earlier this year. *Live In Tokyo* attempts to capture some of the mania that went down, in the same way that the group's *Live In London* album tried to bottle the excitement that their Croydon audience experienced in 1974. This time Amion Duul 2 sound more professional, polished and powerful with a fine set of modern Prog rock anthems supplemented with an old favourite like

vocalist Renate Knapf's muted pop oddity "Archangels Thunderbird", which she performs here like some demented diva. Think of *Live In Tokyo* not merely as a comeback, or lazy companion piece to the group's last studio album, *Nobodyshome* #, but more as an example of how this massively influential and important Krautrock group of yesteryear sound today.

EDWIN POUNCEY

One Inch Punch
Tao Of The One Inch Punch

HUTALOW/INC CD HUT 39 CD

One Inch Punch, who take their name from a deadly martial arts move, have

been dived as, variously, fakers, pseudo-beatniks, HipHop wannabes, little rich kids and convention violators in the most tasteless sense. All wrong. Tao is a fantastic, brave attempt at expressing a vision of music that doesn't fit into a particular mould and which sources its influences from a wide and traditionally incompatible set of genres. Listening to Tao preceptuates an interesting list of artistic forebears: Bowie, Nirvana, Placebo, The New York Dolls, Bad Brains are all recalled, yet juxtaposed with crunching, hardcore HipHop breaks, steel-tipped raps and blistered industrial noise. Tao crunches over the HipHop-rock life of, say, The Red Hot Chili Peppers by following a hardcore

aesthetic throughout, exemplified in the album's title and lyrics which refer to the severe self-discipline of core Taoist beliefs. The HipHop beats are the most frayed and demonic the breakfast libraries can provide. The guitars grind at maximum distortion. Voices are off-key, wiry and recorded badly. Rich rape maybe, but rage all the same.

One Inch Punch is the latest project for Justin Warfield, a half black, half Jewish New Yorker whose own genetic diversity goes some way to explaining ONP's eclecticism. Warfield's earlier release, *My Field Trip To Planet Nine*, held good ideas but missed the mark considerably. This time around, in conjunction with Gamm Garofalo, and particularly on the anti-ballads "Wallflower" and "Take It In The Side", he seems to have realised his wild ideas, finding a parallel between the rebelliousness of HipHop and attack.

One Inch Punch's mistake, if it can be considered a fault, is not to have a sense of humour. The Beastie Boys have managed to get around their public's driftness by their winking for punk and HipHop by taking the piss out of them, themselves and anyone else in firing range. But there's nothing funny about One Inch Punch.

JAKE BARNES

James Plotkin
A Strange, Perplexing

INDISCREET MUSIC CDET 005 CD

Lull

Continuum

RELEASE BB6049 CD

Various Artists
A Storm Of Drones

SOPHENTASMODEL 0966 3CD

Notes from the ooze, part 94. Three more contributions to the fast-expanding Industrial/Ambient marketplace which already shows alarming signs of superheating. The factories may be overproducing a teeny bit. Of course, this has not a little to do with the tendency for putative New-Agers to hitch themselves to the Fourth World bandwagon and bring a few rainsticks into their warty towers (no names, no pack drill).

But there's hope. James Plotkin is a guitar soundscaper who actually avoids sounding overly Frappan. While the Crimson King devotes himself to a

methodical and inexorable construction of sound-pictures, Ploian's treated strings make for a more random and romantic conception of guitar-as-orchestra. Strong, if usually dark colours predominate (this is Ambient, after all), spectacularly so on the exquisite "Be Patient", where a booming sinister bell-like tone is held infernally until a gorgeous chord change entirely alters the landscape with no textual shift at all. There's a glassy Arctic grey to the keening seascape of "The Wrong Context", and a submerged cathedral wailing and gnashing of teeth in the hair-raising "Acceleration".

Lull, aka Mick Harris, allow no poncey compromises with pictorialism: this is Industrial writ large, a 62-minute linear anti-narrative of hisses and groans and hesitantly repetitive slabs of music in which chords seem to try to build up human-pyramid style, before tumbling back into the abyss.

Needless to say all extremes are catered for by *Sombien/Asphodel's* monumental tripartite overview of the scene, a gargantuan survey which got into gear with *Throne Of Drones*, continued with the magnificent *Swarm Of Drones* and now concludes with the equally imposing *Storm Of Drones*. To the who's-who of mechanised moaners are added a raft of cutting edge electroacousticians: Robert

Normandeau, Denis Smalley, Francis Dhomont and Jonty Harrison. A brilliant piece of cross-genre compilation (hobbled only by stenoettes of excruciating affectation and ludicrousness) which manages to construct a coherent and endlessly playable document of sound generation at the end of the century.

PAUL STUPPI

Rome

ROCK
THILL, JOCKEY HILL-LOZ COOP

The melodic weaving its way through the skeletal structures of the opening track, "Leaving Perdition", is a bit of a giveaway. But while Rome are happy to count 70s dub as a major influence on their approach to instrumental music, their debut album is hardly an exercise in exhumation. There's certainly a sensibility here which calls upon various dub elements — bass, echo, dropout — but they are reconstructed to form a sound

that is startlingly new while retaining a residue of familiarity, the result, perhaps, of a blurring between the function of rhythm and noise. Percussive drumbeats compete then merge with percussive electronic sounds ("She's A Blackbelt"), and abstract sounds and freeform bass cohere into a driving, irresistible rhythm ("Deepest Laws").

Rome disregard conventional rock stylings and concentrate on the momentum generated by a combination of improvisation and editing. "Radiolucence" comes closest to more conventional dub mannerisms, but here the guiding hand of Tortoise's John McEntire avoids clichéd pitfalls, producing at one point a mysterious piece of editing where silence hangs in the air for a second before a resurgence of electronic pulses and live drumbeats. "Tunes" as such don't really figure, it's more a case of patterns which establish themselves within the mix of sounds.

Somehow the way in which Rome work with both depth and space — dub in spirit but not in style — makes what they do seem very natural, with a human element among the machinery, despite the absence of a voice. It's not dead music as such, or backdrop head-nodding stuff for that matter, but nor does it sound like dull machine-manipulation. The strength in Rome's music is in the way it gives the impression of spontaneity despite the obvious editing constructs inherent in its production.

TOM RHOE

Swans
Soundtracks For The Blind
YOUNG GOD RECORDS 200

The Swans always wrote every song like it was going to be their last. Even so, the announcement that this is finally it, after some 15 years of honing word, grille, rhythm and half-melody into some of the finest, most enduring, if (unsurprisingly) somewhat unfairly overlooked works in the whole rock canon, comes as a shock.

That they've decided to submit to cold economic reality and call it a day rather than face another soul-destroying struggle with media indifference and a diminishing fan base is sensible enough. But what is truly sad about the whole Swans saga comes at an end now that the fact that the music they've been making these past three years is every bit as

powerful as the extraordinary, tortuously slow, delayed-drop gallows rock with which they announced themselves at the start of the 80s.

These last Swansongs, spread over two CDs (which, appropriately enough, last a lifetime) cap and conclude all the major Swans concerns. At the same time, the instrumental fragments and interludes that punctuate the fully developed pieces hint at all the Swansongs that will never be, just as they provide tantalising glimpses of the future directions The Swans' motivating force Michael Gira, and long-time partner Jarboe, might take.

The musical scope of *Soundtracks* is as breathtaking as it is thematically devastating. Along with its immediate predecessor, *De Turbi Zu*, it constitutes the cement that binds all their preceding music into a single, formidable body of work. The subject of this body of work is the human body itself, and the daily toil taken on both body and soul by pointless, spiritually unenriching work. The tape collage "How They Suffer" underlines the physical frailty that permeates the set. It features two tape extracts, one of Jarboe talking to her mother, who is facing the onset of old age, the other is Gira's father talking about the detached retina that has left him blind. The piece is as moving as it is characteristically bleak, in that it offers no solace other than the sense of calm acceptance in the two voices. This admission of more directly

autobiographical material is rare for a group which always spoke in the first person to articulate universal, and universally ugly, truths. Perhaps the sense of mortality the piece invokes accelerated The Swans' decision to call it a day.

Where the younger, earlier Swans would subject the body to a vicious pummeling, simulating the cruelty of the exchange values that at base govern our lives, the latter-day Swans will pile into a singular rift with the musical intention of providing a release. Monotonal guitar pieces like "The Sound" and "Helpless Child" combine the controlled frenzies of Glenn Branca's guitar orchestras with the emotional intensifications of Austrian blood-artist Herman Nitsch. Where before there seemed no end to The Swans' rhting, now the piling up of overtones finally bursts into the light that illuminates the earlier darkness. But the songs are scarcely less grim. "All Lined Up" is even more devastating in its

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Various Artists

Macro Dub Infection 2

VGSD APRIL 14 CD

The virus has taken hold. The diversity of 1995's *Macro Dub Infection* collection has evolved/coalesced into a morbid and relentless homogeneity — the music herein has gorged on its own disfunctional, dilapidated aesthetic and gathered into a bloated, unhealthy mass of mutant effects and eerie chimes. The contributors, though gathered from all corners of the musical world and including such unlikely dub mutants as Palace (in a soundclash with compier Kevin Martin's Ice), Thomas Koner (as Porter Ricks) and Rhys Chatham, all seem to have been infused with the same fin-de-siècle dread, and all seem to have been forced back by their illness into their own skulls, mesmerized and repelled by the reviving ceaseless trepidation of their late-night thoughts. Sure, dub is at the root of all the music here, but whereas King Tubby and Prince Jammy were concerned with making people dance, with celebratory sonic audacity, with a

delight in timbral novelty, these contemporary dub scientists seem more concerned with chronicling their own malaise.

Dub has always been about psychoacoustics — about the leap from bass to treble, from density into sonic space — but on *Macro Dub Infection 2* that leap is transformed from a farground thrill into a desperate plunge from crumbling certainties into nameless voids. Spectra's terrifyingly abstract "Sub Version" could be an aural counterpart to the dystopian narratives of Cronenberg and Carpenter, it takes the uneasy, reverberated crypticisms of Eric B. and intensifies them a hundredfold, throwing glass-throated operatic wails and menacing street mutterings in for good measure. Similarly, Tao's "Esoteric Reef" takes post-Industrial Alien drones as its base, the uneasy hum of abandoned machinery underpinning brittle, exoskeletal polyrhythms.

The jousance of '70s dub came from the sudden sense of possibility that the technical innovations of the time engendered, the fourth dimension in music — space — had been opened up, presenting thrilling new sonic avenues. But the possibilities have kept multiplying, equipment and sound sources spilling endlessly into the marketplace, threatening to swamp the composer's capacity for comprehension. What once was tantalizing has become bewildering. And *Macro Dub Infection 2* is the sound of dub fighting for breath in the face of information overload, struggling to digest the vast array of ethnomusical resources open to it. The atrophy of influence, the process of composition and the refining of the mix have become tightly fused layers in a palimpsest of sound, gaps in each layer offering momentary and distorted glimpses of the additional layers below.

Take Magnet's "Bites To Go", produced by sometime Herbie Hancock sideman Pat Gleason and Bennie Maupin, and remixed by Techno Animal. This bewildering hybrid fractures under the pressure of its multiple histories, and becomes a menacing, erectile bass cycle increasingly swamped in distortion. Alec Empire, on "When You've Reached Your Peak," seems to offer the only other legitimate response to the weight of history — awesome, septic frenzy. Use a head-on collision between Moribond, Ed Rush and a jorjload of razor blades, the track is alive with convulsive hatred and nervous energy, slopping away like the rest of the compilation, from easy assimilation and wholesale comprehension.

CHRIS SMARP

updated version than it was in its original take on Gira's solo album *Dravonid*. What was once a flesh parade is now a march of the dead — ghost shapes indecent in the winter light and the narrative armored in Gira's most weatherbeaten baritone. Time and again, Gira and Jarboe pick at the scales of their past to see if they can still breed "Empathy" straddles the *Grind-Holy Money* and *Children Of God* eras with the narrator cursing a lapse into kindness as a betrayal of weakness, while the last song, "The Final Sac", betrays the notion of love, divine or otherwise, as a form of dominance and submission.

Right up to their dying moments The Searns have stayed true to their withering bleak vision: it has absolutely no companion in rock. Indeed, it's Gira's obsessive way of putting a small, yet complete vocabulary through endless permutations of the same, seemingly self-loathing theme can be compared to

anything, it should be to the novels of the late, great Austrian writer Thomas Bernhard. Meanwhile, another Austrian, the satirist Karl Kraus, snarled up why he and their like keep gnawing at the same corpse. "Because," he said, "I persist in believing there's life in it yet."

BIBA KOPF

Various Artists

Music With No Name Vol. 1

B&W BV 080 CD/EP

Now this almost wins my 1996 Thinking Person's Cool Lifestyle Soundtrack award, and if I had a proper job, I would listen to it on headphones as I commuted to work. Dreamy drum 'n' bass, laser-then-thru jazz-dance beats, splashes of African flavor, a tad of sophisticated desolation — it reminds me of crime caramel, in the sense that a lot of restaurants serve crime caramel but it's still nice when you get a really

good one. The B&W label describe it as a "cross-cultural sound clash", but they're kidding, there's nothing so vulgar as a clash here, everything's frapped to perfection.

The concept on top, the first in an ongoing series, is to let loose expert contemporary remixers on the B&W back catalogue of jazz and World Music. This works because the remix guys (and guys they all are) are so cool they do what the hell they like. So Spring Heel Jack just sprinkles a couple of samples over their excellent track. Things get steadily moodier and slower via pieces by Wocob, DJ Smash and Azzica Blues, till we reach the San Francisco 3am-in-the-dive vibe of Chief Xcel. This one is a remix of saxophonist John Tchicai, and the mojo is functional.

Also from San Francisco is the other star track, Gavin Hardie's deliciously weird reworking of South African group Amarnondo — a group formed

specifically to counter the bad influence of "Western music" (by which they mean Bon Jovi) in South Africa. Hardie takes the point and splatters the track with old Electro percussion and guitars that whoop like coyotes. The Man With No Name's favorite record

CLIVE BELL

Various Artists

United Mutations

LO RECORDINGS LOO 03 CD/EP

MLO

Plastic Apple

MDS MUSIC MACHINE CD/EP

Until recently, remixes only used to happen once, appearing as addendums to singles. With his label Lo Recordings (and his numerous musical personas), Jon Tye follows the idea to its vanishing point: why not reconstruct the simulacrum, remodel the image? In fact,

like Ray Bradbury's time traveller, treading on a butterfly on pre-homo sapiens Earth, only to find the alphabet altered when he returns to his present, the remix offers the opportunity to return to the source, tamper with the elements, engineer new outcomes and generate parallel threads of life for music to follow

Lo Recordings is about the only record label currently enraptured by this particular meme. Like driftwood, tracks from backwaters all across the globe seem to wash up at the Lo Recordings HQ, and for Tye, the compilation album serves as a workbench on which he joins them together. *United Musicians'* opening gambit is the roar of amp-ed-up vibrators courtesy of nose-jesters Barbed. Then comes a torrent of different tracks. Luke Vibert's cheeky take on *Play School* thought-control, Li on raucous form covering Liquid Lubricants' "Out", Dublin rockers Wormhole rumbling out of a forgotten Krautrock keller, tight-zipped drum 'n' bass from Canada's David Krutman, dystopianer from a coalition featuring Sonic Youth's Thurston Moore and Infrastructure (a UK Improv collective including Pat Thomas and Geoff Serke), with "beats and mix by Tye, additional ambience James & Chant". With tracks often falling through several production nets, their credits light a kind of paraphernalia war which one can dip the most names, processes, add-ons? "Written and produced by Torosio, remodeled by Darryl @ Soul Static Sound" on "Why We Fight", "Voice Wendy Harper, guitars Sarah Peacock/Darren Seymour, beats Soykid, production Twisted Science" (on Echo Park's "Razor Kiss"). Four free jazz vignettes by Sycophants (aka James & Chant) thread throughout the album

Bash Street Kids enjoying a lock-in at the Impulse! studio. The most rewarding moments still with repeated listenings, but among them are Marjono's "Villain", a Mouse On Mars-style space ballad, and "Debase", where Aphex Twin intercepts Mike Flowers's feedgood pop blast. The track's coda features two of the Twin's finest minutes of music, turning up the brightness on the original's brittle beats and horns and stretching them out like fluorescent gum

As if to prove a point, the first album by MLO — another Tye incarnation, this time with partner Pete Smith — has been reassured as a triple upgrade package that includes a complete rethink by Ninja Tune's DJ Food, and an assemblage of all the remixes that came out at the time. Strictly Tye's addition of trincures to MLO's somewhat greyer original is getting the most re-use on my system at present. As for the rest, archive it for the 2002 version

ROB YOUNG

David S Ware Quartet Godspealized

OWS16 CD

Of those building on the legacy of Albert Ayler, tenor saxophonist David S Ware leads the field. Not as far out as Charles Gayle, he's freer than David Murray (as Lunon Chawick rightly noted in his review of Ware's *Duo in The Wire* 146). But Murray's work has much wider stylistic references, while Gayle often seems to abandon melodic interest altogether. Ware remains closest to Ayler in his combination of freedom and roots

And it really is Ayler who's the model here, not late Coltrane. Coltrane developed a marvellous thick tone in his late recordings, but Ware's tone is cavernous and, like Ayler, he runs

penitently close to bathos. He's declamatory without being — as Charles Gayle sometimes is — hecating. His raucous thudding, replete with multiphonics and overblowing, occupies most of the solo space, distending and pulling the theme around, and ultimately desolving it. But pianist Matthew Shipp takes impressive solos on the title track and "The Stargazers" — his approach is slightly more straightforward in comparison, as pianists tend to be unless they're Cecil Taylor or Marilyn Crispell. William Parker, giant among free jazz bassists, and drummer Suse Barba, new to me, complete a powerful line-up

Maybe the titles suggest a "Coltrane ecstacy" element. Most of the tracks have some anchoring in chord changes, melodic line and/or pulse. "Godspealized" (I'm still trying to say it) and "Wadsworthsphere" have Ayler-ish gospel elements. "Inner Temple" is altogether more forbidding, a multiphonic squall with no melodic base, while the boggy line of "Wadsworth Through Time" introduces a chattering pulse. Sun Ra's "The Stargazers" is the only non-original, and the only track that genuinely swags — I missed Ware's obligatory deconstruction of a standard or two, like "Yesterdays" on *Flight Q?*. But *Godspealized* is a bristling addition to a magnificent set of albums

ANDY HAMILTON

Weather Report Sweetnighter

COLUMBIAREGACY485102 CD

There's nothing too startling about this reissue of Weather Report's third LP, from 1973, except perhaps the sleeve notes. It seems surprising now that Down Beat critic John Ephland, writing this year, should feel impelled to

unpack the controversy surrounding the group's music, or indeed, that there ever was any controversy around it at all. Much of it now sounds like by-the-book period fusion, at the more cerebral end of the scale, which rather belies his reasoned arguments about how the group defuse traditional notions of background and foreground. True, there's little straight soling here — but who would have expected such a thing from alumni of the Miles Davis late 60s academy of elusive density? What's surprising, in fact, about *Sweetnighter* is how much the performances fall short of what's hinted at — how reasonably the tendencies towards disorder and expenditure are corralled in. Much of the record sounds like a sumptuously produced exercise in damage limitation

Weather Report often tended to deliver less — in terms of either catharsis or fascination — than they seemed to promise, as if between the two poles of orchestral brassiness ("Birdland" et al) and the chilled austerity of their first album, they were forever hovering in suspension. There's a certain glibness about some of these tracks, undercutting the more interesting potential of the persistent impression that something's forever about to happen. The opening percussion gala "Boogie Woogie Waltz", at once straight-ahead and bet-hedging, manages to put off any real event for a good nine minutes, with Zawinul's quavering and chirping-link keyboards entertaining us the while. For many, *Sweetnighter*'s greatest fault (a consistent shortcoming) is in relegating Wayne Shorter to the sidelines — when he flourishes, on his oddball baroque composition "Manicote", the fuss of keyboards and percussion is so much needless supplementary augmentation

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Freefall

Clive Bell plunges through music's protecting veil, and enters the realms of sonic absurdity. This month: reminiscing with Alan McGee about 21st century music

Dateline: London Docklands, December 2008 Creation Records boss Alan McGee lights a fresh cigar and stares out of his 45th floor window over a wintry Isle Of Dogs. "You remember Trojans? What happened to that?"

A fascinating question indeed, but I remind him gently that we're here to discuss the first decade of what the Japanese call "SadPro", the controversial term applied to mega-scale concerts of free improvisation.

"I wasn't the first person to put that stuff in a stadium," McGee examines his brandy glass quizzically, nostrils quavering. "You want to know how it really started? In 1982 I ran a club called the BeSop in the old London Musicians' Collective building, a deserted British Rail canteen up a fire escape in Camden Town. Like New York, but without the restaurants. Anyway, I'd see these guys playing, some of it was passionately brilliant, some of it sounded like they were cleaning your bath. The audience was... Well, Ornette Coleman played to 2000 people in Kenilworth and I'm like, hello, is this the same thing? Then I saw The Grateful Dead, and it clicked."

"What came next?" Evan Parker played the last night of the Proms, there were fights in the audience, six people in hospital. Stravinsky fans were delirious, they said it was like the old days had come back, you know, people cared. Sonic Youth did that big tour with Roger Smith acoustic duetting with Thurston Moore, then Toop and Eastley opened for The Pet Shop Boys' farewell tour. I guess a turning point was Lol Coxhill and Steve Beresford hosting their own TV show, and Michael Jackson

insisting on appearing. After that all hell broke loose: you had Maggie Nicols on Desert Island Discs, Phil Minton presenting Top Of The Pops, Alan Wilkinson was made Professor of Baritone Saxophone at the Royal College of Music.

"Of course, Prince made that double album with Derek Bailey, and suddenly everyone's like 'Yeah, I been listening to free improv for years, man, I got all those John Stevens LPs'. Jesus, everyone had to have a piece. I tell you, by 2001 you could cause a stir by not having Bailey guest on your album. Alterations were offered five million to reform, and John Butcher had to play secret gigs in basement art galleries just to get some peace and quiet."

"I think it all went sour around the AHM tour in 2006. Then, it was too big by then. People had always seen you lose the intimacy, the physical grain of the music, in a 50,000 seat stadium. Watching Alan Tomlinson play the trombone on some gigantic screen, standing 500 yards from the stage, you can hardly hear what he's muttering, it's not the same. By the time AHM got to Colombia — well, a lot of those stones are bullshit, and I don't believe they could have got the Cadillac into the hotel elevator in the first place. That shit with the Marmite toast — hey, you got three English guys on the road for months like that, there's going to be friction. Don't blame free improvisation."

"You can say it was a mistake to put AHM in front of 250,000 Brazilians, but remember, the earthquake was actually predicted for that Tuesday. The drumming had nothing to do with it. Yeah, the lawyers are still working it out, they'll be there for a while."

"Let me just tell you something: you can never go back to how it was. You want to put on a free improv gig in a room above a pub, a few friends, no security on the door — forget it. And I miss those days if I felt, you know, refreshing to spend an evening listening to something with zero commercial potential. Where do you go now to find that?" □

You get the impression, as with so many of these early 70s virtuoso groups, that the members felt constrained by the pressure to make an impression — which is why so much of it sounds like virtuoso equivocation. But when they let their hair down, or go straight for the chilly side of things, the result is a very different matter. "125th Street Congress" — with its clattering drums the most salvaged dance piece here — acquires a bassline about halfway through that's nothing more or less than Bo Diddley R&B. Among the brasher alarms and excursions, two glacial miniatures, "Adios" and "Will", tell a different story entirely. A case of insufficient focus, as Ephraim hints? More like a case of too much, and too mannered.

JONATHAN ROYMEY

in brief **electronica**

Rob Young *hears the machines doing it for themselves*

Bochum Welt Module 2 **REPHUX** CUP 042 CUP **Cylob** Cylobium. Sunset **REPHUX** CUP 093 CUP **Leo**

Anibaldi *Void* **REPHUX** CUP 031 CUP Rephlex's dry, minimal and slightly arch releases remind me of those beakbeated, whirly than white 70s rockers like Free, Shoes and Bread, not, you understand, because of the sound they make, but their relationship to current Electronica is about as distant as those groups were from psychedelia's technicolour utopias. As with the label's member, RD James, the business of releasing product is an unwelcome intrusion. Bochum Welt (aka Ganjula Di Costanzo) reverses the clunkiness of early 80s Electro Streetsounds and the embeccic programming languages used by extinct computers like the Vic-20 (Peets, Pokes, Nexis and all). Cylob's titles ("Dof", "Dof", "Dof", etc.) probably took two minutes, but Chris Jell's programming takes a little longer. Beat clatter blindly, perched on the cusp of distortion, artificially sweetened by hoarse, tooting blips. Anibaldi's *Void* is the most 'out' record in the Rephlex catalogue. The last three tracks flutter like the death-rhythm of a dying butterfly, the first three resemble grained test-tones, swooping and twisting in a distorted digital noise. Paralyzing like a facet of Ralges.

Andrew Brix/Dr Atmo *Einmurmeln* **REPHUX** CUP 032 CUP **Alter Ego** Decoding The Hacker Myth **WARTHOUSE** WED 016 CUP Compared to Mike Pletsaux in Frankfurt on one hand, and the Mouse On Mars/Dual mob in Cologne on the other, this is nothing but fourth division Bleepmetal. Dr Atmo (Rax artist and part of Deep Space Network) particularly disappoints with *Einmurmeln*: its Muzak for Ikea browsers he probably knocked up in his sleep (track titles: "Sofa", "Hanging Hiss", "Armchair", "Heavenbird"). Frankfurt duo Alter Ego's ressed Hacker Myth already sounds as dated as its cybernetic title. Labouring hard for atmosphere and a sense of mystique, they end up with overproduced, portentous dreck. I want to be ravished by texture, not given a corporate tour of the Yamaha factory.

Lida Husik *Green Blue Fire* **ASTRALWORKS** ASW51 49 CUP **Lida Husik** sings and plays keyboards and guitar, here she teams up with Besounant Hannant and Richard Brown to make a collection of ten naïf electronic songs. Husik's voice grates like Tamita Tikaram and sn't really wired into the

electronics, the tempo stays slow and unfunky. Techno should move faster than language, here the arrangements stumble under the dead weight of Husik's laboured lyrics.

Love Inc *Life's A Gas* **FORCE INC** FIM 1 021 CUP **Gas** **MILLE PLATEAUX** MP3 03 CUP Two spits from the Electro-nb of Mike Ink, a manstary at the Force Inc HQ. *Life's A Gas* cuts it fine on the sampling front: the cover features artwork (best excised) from all the LPs sampled on the record, including Mike's, The Bee Gees, Kraftwerk, and some nameless horrors' familiar from the bargain bin. Needless to say, few of these are recognisable, apart from the T-Rex riff that gives the album its name. Gas, from Ink's Dark Ambient incarnation, is a real pea-souper, a sprawling mist of sonic gloom that occasionally resolves itself fractally into a wheezing melody. Sticky for the sickly.

Makyo *Russa* **BIENVUE** BIEN 06 0606 CUP Unfortunately, once you've witnessed at close quarters the mighty forces unleashed by Talvin Singh's tabla adventures in hyperrealism, virtually all other global-fusion-france-dub efforts

sound like limp ladies' fingers. Maybe, the branch of Tokyo-based DJ/writer Go Fazio, would have benefitted from the input of digits as loose as Talvin's. Mostly treading an Easternized digital dub territory equivalent to the rubber grooves of African Head Charge or Summit, I'd like to have heard more low end, more fire — even on Bill Laswell's mix of "Devalbanda." Still, this is apparently old material — look to the new.

Rhythm & Noise Chasm's *Accord* (ASHOOL 0965) CD Since 1968, West Coast deracen Naut/Humon's Rhythm & Noise brigade — a kind of jouissance Test Dept — have been creating weird, immersive post-industrial environments, deconstructing and challenging for their immersed participants (like the time they took soaked, blinded punters into an underground city in Seattle). Chasm's *Accord* is an aural document of their 30 year trip: a mixture of tracks from two B0s LPs, plus a bunch of unreleased material — the best is "Cellar M", a reel-to-reel snapshot from a 1972 performance in a brewery warehouse. Clanging metal grinders, smashing glass and vacuum cleaners are punctuated by the occasional face-shattering scream — sounds like quite a party. Most of the music stands up fine away from its performance context; it has that recognisable 'busy' tone that characterises so many installation/soundtracks. Humon's three 'songs', appearing at the end, are best programmed out, though.

Seefeel Ch-Vox (DEPHUX CAT 016) CD **Alec Empire** Les Etolies Dies Filles Mortes (HLE PATEAUX) 30 CD Les impensables — Seefeel's new, low-key release explores obsession, organic repetition as intently as Morton Feldman, whether through pure electronics or guitar treatments with all edges severely blunted. Although rumours of Seefeel's internal struggles sound like Spinal Tap — constant in-fighting and jealousies over their excellent individual projects (Woodenspoon, Dialecta, Echo Park, Auribond, Scali) — Ch-Vox shows them enriched and taking nourishment from the flux. Meanwhile, Alec Empire's latest sees him dropping the sagehammer in favour of the solo Moog. Like a feralish homage to Sun

Rai's synthesized Gordon knots, Empire twiddles away on a fizzing keyboard according to a logic and harmonic system that appears to have been conceived under a different gravitational field from this planet's. Absolut verrückt!

in brief **new jazz**

Richard Cook blows a blue note across a sea of jazz

Ginger Baker Trio *Falling Off The Roof* (ATLANTIC 82900) CD Last year's *Gon!* Back Home reinstated Baker as master jazz drummer, and was a considerable relief after all those noisy ITM albums. The return match with Bill Friesel and Charlie Haden is just as accomplished and maybe even more fun — their Monk and bebop tunes have a simple, generous zing, and the originals are bright or graceful to order. Most of all, you can just tune in to Baker's elegant time and listen to that.

Borah Bergman/Thomas Borgmann/Peter Brötzmann *Ride Into The Blue* (KONEXX 000) CD There's no mistaking Bergman's commitment to the sharp end, and after meetings with Roscoe Mitchell and Evan Parker, here he is with two similarly severe and incendiary spirits. Brötzmann for once has to settle for equal impact with the assertive and full-voiced Borgmann, who mirrors some of the old master's rowdy boacuity, while Bergman seems to go entirely his own way without seeming out of joint with the general drift. This is old-fashioned improv that still lights the touch-paper.

Don Byron Quintet *No-Vibe Zone: Live At The Knitting Factory* (ENTERTAINMENT WEEKLY 191) CD Recorded in front of about nine people, judging by the applause, Byron's group eschew the sometimes ponderous importance of his Namesuch albums. The opening revision of Ornette's "WRU!" is the most brilliant kind of revivalism, and the three long pieces which follow (plus a pretty standard in "Tangerine") are loaded with strong ideas and great playing — from David Gilmore (some of his best on record), the superb Uri Caine, Kenny Davis and Smitty Smith, who can play



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this smart shit, at least as well as he does on his midstream things. Byron leads without grandstanding

Eugene Chadbourne Blessed With The Hook 120 12 242 cd Chadbourne's Parachute LPs will probably never make it to CD, but they still seem to be his most significant work. Too much of the rest is mere snacking at the post-emo improv dinner, and this scrabopole of duets — with Bailey, Zorn, Bernink, a muffled Charles Tyler and bongo guy Volcanic Verkerk — is no better or worse than the rest. Historians will welcome the 1980 pairing with the

as-yet-unfrozen Zorn, though I preferred the bongo capers

Cyrus Chestnut Blessed Quotesthe Atlantic 80948 cd His fourth release for Atlantic makes Chestnut's gospel roots specific, and marks out his rarity among today's piano ecclectics. This set of spirituals, hymns and carols, recorded alone in beautiful close-up, is equal parts harmony, meditation and new chapter. He never plays the tunes the way you expect (sample "Silent Night" as one amazing example), and when he says in the notes that "what you hear is simply my heart", there's no choice but

to believe him. As entire and satisfying a jazz record as I've heard all year

Steve Coleman Curves Of Life RCA 74321 316932 cd Previously available as a French import, this is the first of three live Colemans, with Five Elements abetted by Uncle David Murray on two tracks and a trio of rap voices grabbing the mics on the finale. Steve's jams aren't like anyone else's: rather than taking the hard-bop maxim of ten choruses on the blues, he'll play a circular solo on an endlessly looping rhythm. The result is a kind of brainy trance music, gripping in the moment, vaguely hypnotic over the long haul, but impenetrable at any point in between. Of course it's smart, ingenious stuff in its way, but so is so much else which doesn't start from jazz as its base-rate of cool. And then you see what Steve's problem is

Mark Dresser Music For Contrabass 40000 Factory Works K1W 173 cd Dresser's solo album is as often called bass sound as it is rhythm or melody (or structure and shape). Culled from old (1980s) recordings and compositions, it's a work-to-date primer and arguably more important to him than to us: some of the pieces move at a dreary pace, even for a bass solo album, and the most absorbing piece is actually by (percussionist) Gerry Hemingway

Joe Gallivan/Brian Cuomo/Elton Dean The Origin Of Man 10-000001 102 High-Falutin' title for a trio session of rather modest, quirky ambition. A pleasure to hear again the great Joe Gallivan, now hidden away in Hawaii, with local partner Cuomo, and a vacationing Dean sits in with his crusty lyrics and peculiarly grained phrasing. A drink of water after Joe's lowering innocence and none the worse for it.

Tom Harrell Labyrinth RCA Victor 09026 68512 cd Typically impeccable Signed to a major at last, Harrell does no more or less than you'd expect with this chivalled set of originals. Fellow horn is Don Braden on most tracks, but several feature brass arrangements and there's some score-stealing by Steve Turre. What one remembers, though, is the deep elegance of a tune like "Majesty", something that goes hand in hand with the blameless grace of Harrell's own improvising

Brantford Marsalis The Dark Keys Columbia AXC 57876 cd Give Brantford his due, he's not making records to compete with Kenny G. This is as hard and uncompromising a jazz record as you could get out of a major label. Half his discography is conceptual — the blues album, the hip-hop album — but this is in the other half, the go-in-the-studio-and-blow part. Egged on by Reginald Veal and Tim Watts, he just piles in and lets you know what a motherfucker he is on the horn for an hour or so. One track with Joe Lovano is a sweet show of tenor sanity, but when Kenny Garrett sits in on "Judas Island" the flame goes way up

Joe McPhee Quartet Legend Street One 09P 115 cd The 'quartet' part is misleading, since there are only two four-somes out of eight tracks, brambly tracks. McPhee has Frank Lowe as the other horn and it's hard to imagine a darker pairing, though the opening "Lowellville" is a genial enough dialogue. The weak link is David Prentice's violin, a tiresome scrape for much of the time

Howard Riley/Elton Dean Quartet Legend 89212 cd Recorded like they were in somebody's cellar, this is deliberately unlovely post-bop, with Dean coming on like a weird amalgam of Steve Lacy and Charlie Rouse, and Riley Anglicizing Monk, along with his own flinty swing. Mario Costanzo and Mark Sanders brew up unsettling rhythms down below. The title track is a superb piece of boiling freebop, one of those improvisations which seems to gather a dark, gripping momentum all its own. There are muddling passages elsewhere, but this is a notably fierce document

John Zorn & Masada Seven/Zayim 01W 915 cd He's got as much out of this as he ever will, though that doesn't mean that it's stopped sounding good: it's such a refined and talented quartet that, like The MQJ, he could work at it for another 40 years. If you have any of the other Masadas you won't need this one (though I'm not sure how much he has to do with it). Joey Baron is outstanding, if too loud in the mix, and Dave Douglas has a mystery which does tend to find out Zorn's own freebop range on the alto □

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multi media

Mark Espiner installs himself in a magic bus shelter



Music for airports? That was the high-flying BOs. The downswing 90s has music for bus shelters. These particular shelters, dotted along arterial routes connecting North London and the West End, are simultaneously architectural projects, temporary art exhibitions and an annex to the Camden Mix festival. Together they make up the Roadworks project, as coordinated by FAT (Fashion Architecture Taste) with financial assistance from JC DeCaux, the company that makes and maintains the shelters and which styles their products as "Street Furniture". For one week in early November, Roadworks transformed



ten bus shelters into installation pieces through the collaboration of artists, architects, and musicians including Squarepusher, Orang, Acaze, Dirty Three and others. So briefly, a narrative bus ride through Bloomsbury or a short walk around Euston Road punctuated by bus stops became a trip through an urban Erebus. My Virgin is the man who co-ordinated the shelters' sonic

elements, one Pendle. We have agreed to meet at the first stop: Forever.

I sit at the stop and take in the work of Tim Noble and Sue Webster. On top of the shelter a Blackpool-type illumination spells out in flashing lights: FOREVER. As accompaniment, a Wurliizer organ plays "Moon River" and "Blue Moon", the music swelling from hidden speakers. I am lost in schmelz. The ad hoardings display huge love hearts inscribed with "Tim 4 Sue" which have already been



defaced with a graffiti tag. I watch the 13 and 274 buses come and go, crowding out and adding to the music as they pass, and am jolted by my reverie. "It took ages to find the right speakers to break above the traffic," says Pendle by way of introduction. He points to some tiny speakers above the ad box. "Good old ASDA came up with the goods. Do you want to hear some Squarepusher?"

As we perversely walk to the next stop, Pendle tells me about each shelter's soundtrack, and the way their impact changes depending on the location, the position of the speakers, and the time of day. Pendle was once a member of bliss-rockers Butterfly Child, but is now a collector and designer of sound (he contributed the music to the "FAT" shelter). He tells me that Squarepusher was planning to play live at the next shelter today, and that we might just catch him. No such luck. The shelter is



located outside the Halifax Building Society on Tottenham Court Road. It has been adorned with 'adverts' which list the rise and decline of council house sales and prices from 1985 onwards. The roof has been crowned in glorious trash: The sensation of standing in a thatched bus stop absorbing the epileptic breakfasts of Squarepusher and contemplating housing politics outside a building society is truly arresting. All the elements interact and in turn absorb you as you wait; traffic noise adds its own rhythmic dynamic to the piece.

On to the next one. Surveying the Capital Radio building and reflecting the rest of its surroundings is Tolmers Tower — a huge mirrored building on the Euston Road. The shelter in front of it has likewise been clad in reflective material. Walking between the two and sitting inside the mirrored environment is truly eerie, made more so by the clever use of sound. Here the speakers are situated under the seats and the sound seems to drift up from behind you. As the traffic roars by the sense of equilibrium is disturbed still further: the traffic noise goes from right to left, but the sound in the shelter moves in the opposite direction — not as loud, but providing a discreet mirror image. "We put two SPM8 microphones out of phase on the top of the shelter," Pendle explains. Wind and water chimes mix with the sound of trains pulling away. The result is captivating. You get hypnotised into taking a bus.

At the stop in Russell Square, one of the capital's most polluted spots, a tape containing two songs by Billy Bragg looms endlessly. This one is cardboard city — completely insulated in brown cardboard

and a little warmer on the seats because of it. Bragg's folksy strains seem cosy in this space, despite the fact that two bus drivers are cursing hearing the same two songs again and again, and try to persuade Pendle to change the tape to Beethoven's Ninth.

As we pass through the shelters, the interaction between the sites and their attendants and the way both reach out to and are enveloped by the city provides a truly valuable and unusual experience. Round the corner from the Centre Point building at the southern tip of Tottenham Court Road, the ad hoarding on Nigel Coates's shelter urges us to "UNZIP THE CITY". A pounding House track by Pull Circle and DJs Lazorby & Rice rattles the speakers. Life-size photographs of urinals are stuck to the side of shelter suddenly, on New Oxford Street, you find yourself in an approximation of a clubland toilet. □ For the FAT Website, go to <http://www.fat.co.uk> E-mail Mark Espiner at mark@mimcorp.com



new notes at a glance information from SPNM

1 Music of the Absurd
Kagel et 65
QEH RPH2

1 Archsaus String
Quartet - Leonard
Salzedo 75th Birthday
Concert
Haydn, Salzedo***
Beethoven
PR RPH3

2 Virgil Thomson 100th
Anniversary
Celebration
Thomson
WH

4 Shell LSO National
Tour
MacMillan, Schumann,
Beethoven
Royal Concert Hall, Glasgow G2
0141 287 5511

4 SUN Music
Ensemble
Thompson*** Hindson*,
Southorpe, Guymer***
Edwards
St. Cyprian's Church, London
N7W1 0181 208 1541

4 RCM Chorus,
Symphony Orchestra
and Choralists of
Westminster Cathedral
Britten
Westminster Cathedral, London
SW1 0171 758 9096

5 Die Soldaten
Zimmermann
LC

5 Shell LSO National
Tour
MacMillan, Schumann,
Beethoven
Music Hall, Aberdeen AB1
01224 611122

5 Clocks and Clocks
part 1 (1 & 2)
Ligeti, Mahler
RPH1

5 Ian Pace plays
Finnsley
Finnsley***
CH 0181 948 6615

5 Cromwell Trio
Weir, Musgrave, Clarke,
Smith*** Bennett, Whetzel,
Brill
BMBC

5 City of Birmingham
Symphony Orchestra
Weir, Brahms, Kurtág,
Beethoven
Symphony Hall, Broad Street,
Birmingham B1 0121 212 3333

6 Royal College of
Music C20th
Ensemble
Finnsley, Bainbridge, Carter,
Lavandie
RCM, Prince Consort Rd, London
SW7 0171 589 3643

8 Orchestre of St.
John's, Smith
Square
Taverner, Strauss
JSS

9 Clocks end Clocks
part 1 (3 & 4)
Ligeti
Chelifford Room, RPH1

9 Clocks & Clocks
part 1 (5)
Debussy, Ligeti
RPH1

9 Jonathan Powell,
piano
Xenakis, Nancarrow,
Sciarrino***, Finnsley, Dillon,
Feldman
CH 0171 263 6247

9 Paul Robinson's
'Harmonie Band'
Machaut, Robinson,
Skousa, Ressler, Saffie
PR RPH3

10 Die Soldaten
Zimmermann
LC

10 Shell LSO
National Tour
MacMillan, Schumann,
Beethoven
NH

10 Pictures of
Hungary
Kurtág*, Jeney***, Vajda***
Orbán*, Farkas
CH 0181 894 6342

11 Elliott Schwartz et
60
Schwartz, Finnsley*** Weir,
Arel*** Halswell,
Williams*** Romano***
Dickinson*** Bainbridge,
Saxton
BMBC

11 The Continuum
Ensemble
Hughes*** Ligeti, Walter***
Finch*** Bachmannov,
Busoni, Sorabji
Hinde Street Church, London
W1 01395 225400

11 Birmingham
Contemporary
Music Group &
Birmingham Royal
Ballet
Rawal, Kermes, Weir,
Stravinsky
Symphony Hall, Broad Street,
Birmingham B1 0121 212
3333

12 Die Soldaten
Zimmermann
LC (see ad p.15)

12 London Chamber
Group
Christie, Herbert, Jones*,
Burnell*** Arnold,
Gulfoyle*** Quail,
Skempston, Taylor*** Perri-
Evans, Maxwell Davies,
Livingstone***
BMBC

12 Birmingham
Conservatoire
Fennychough, Barnett,
Holloway, Ligeti, Tan Dun,
Crumb
Adrian Beale Hall, Birmingham
Conservatoire, Birmingham B1
0121 331 5901

13 Roald Dahl's
'Jack and the
Beanstalk'
Cherubini, Schumann,
Pelloni***
Royal Albert Hall, Kensington
Gore, London SW7
0171 589 6212

13 Ensemble X &
The Continuum
Ensemble
Walter***
Congressional Hall, Cecil
Gore, Nottingham
0115 941 9418

14 Brunei
Ensemble
Prokofiev, Burrell,
Caskin, Haydn
Victoria Rooms, Bristol BS1
01222 563676

15 Absolute Zero
de Falla, Broadby,
Spears*** Bainbridge,
Bettison, Zappa
Bridge Lane Theatre, Battersea,
London SW1
0171 228 8828

15 Bingham String
Quartet
Southorpe, Altan***
Horowitz, Prokofiev
PR RPH3

16 Birmingham
Contemporary
Music Group
Turnage, Lang, Weir,
Rawal, Schönberg
QEH RPH2

17 Hoffmann-Engl
plays Hoffmann-
Engl
Hoffmann-Engl***
BMBC

KEY:
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** UK Première
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BMBC: British
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In this month's books section:

Zappa in triplicate; a jazz buyer's bible; a modern classical primer; Satie's sly sentences

No Commercial Potential: The Saga Of Frank Zappa

By David Walley
DA CAPO (PRK \$11.95)

Electric Don Quixote: The Story Of Frank Zappa

By Neil Slaven
OPINUS (PRK \$17.95)

Being Frank: My Time With Frank Zappa

By Nigey Lennon
CALIFORNIA CLASSICS (PRK \$11.95)

Three books attesting to the divergent approaches Zappa's 71-disc legacy can sustain: David Walley was his first biographer. *No Commercial Potential* first appeared in 1972, 25 pages were added to the 1980 edition, 30 more to this. Pamela Zrubica (Zappa's flatmate and "The Voice Of The Cheese" on *Uncle Meat*) provides Walley with insights denied to biographers working from cuttings. Walley comes from the same generation as Zappa: a vintage cheese himself, his views have maturity and punch. Prose and layout breathe

the Mothers Of Invention's freak surrealism. For a variety of complex reasons, Walley fell out with Zappa over the book, but that merely adds in a braising structural tension. Though Walley isn't quite *gonzo* enough to appreciate Zappa's antics in the 80s and 90s, at least he has a personality, gravitas, something to say.

Neil Slaven is a British Blues Boom producer and blues writer. It's unfortunate he doesn't put this experience to work. *Electric Don Quixote* is what is termed a 'scissors-and-paste job'. Hence Zappologists will know 95 per cent of the material, while civilians will find it dry and fragmentary. Apart from irritating first-edition typos and name misspellings, it is at least accurate. However, it is also incredibly dull.

Quixote's blurb claims that Slaven has written "the definitive last word", but current research by Finland's Zappological supremo, Juha Romppanen, is unearthing reams of fresh material. Rather than merely amassing clippings, Romppanen is actively interviewing protagonists. All historians concede that the idea of the definitive account is illusory. As with Hendrix, the Zappa biographies will get fatter and fatter as the years proceed. Slaven's book will be superseded,

simply because he has so little of his own to contribute.

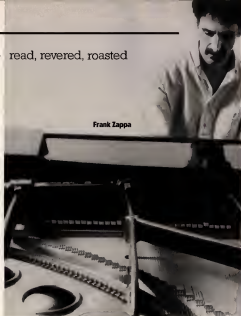
Nigey Lennon, on the other hand, has plenty to say. There might not be definitive books, but there are certainly irreplaceable ones, which is the word to describe *Being Frank*. Nigey Lennon is a guitarist, songwriter and composer, and still keeps the Los Angeles freak flame burning. She had an affair with Zappa in the early 70s, and toured with The Mothers. She looks like Joan Jett, and her memoir is both spiky and musically literate. Her descriptions of rehearsals get to the heart of Zappa's freaky West Coast arranging, the bizarre eclecticism and the strange purple power. Lennon's previous books were on Mark Twain and Alfred Jarry, which indicates the kind of cultural perspective required to get a grip on Zappa: something brighter than rock-journalist pedantry.

BEN WATSON

The Penguin Guide To Jazz On CD

By Richard Cook and Brian Morton
PENGUIN (PRK £16)

OK, you might want to own all the extant recordings of Charles Mingus's 1964 tour, or Anthony Braxton's 1985 UK



Frank Zappa



Charles Mingus

PHOTO: GERMARD ROLY

joint, and maybe one day you will, but where do you start? In jazz the arrival of the CD has meant that the sheer amount of music available is too much for any but the very wealthy to do more than gesture at keeping up with. This is where guides come in handy, and this, in its third edition, is the pick of the bunch. Other types of book will supply more historical and biographical info, or discographies, this one is for the principal listening experience of today the private one. But it's much more than a simplifying aid to making a purchase. It's not the kind of book to narrow things down to a set of classic bluff-your-way must-haves. The book is so comprehensive in its listings, so well-indexed, that a few hours' browsing is more likely to exacerbate the lust for more sound than to close it down. Trawling through the index to follow a particular musician's path is likely to give rise to the kind of record-buying itch that you just have to scratch, and fast.

The first response to the project is the jaw-dropper blimey, 2000 new entries since the last edition two years ago. And then revisions. But isn't jazz now simply too baggy a category to remain on top of? Almost but not quite. There will be few among the book's readers who will approach Edward Vesala, Joe Venuti and Eddie 'Cleanhead' Vinson with the even-handed enthusiasm of the authors, or, for that matter, contemporary gatekeepers as different as John Abercrombie and Joe Morris, but Cook and Morton manage a catholicism that is convincing and never bland.

As in previous editions, there is a star-system, which again points up the scale of the book's ambitions. How can one suggest an equivalence between two three-star albums such as *Mingus Plays Piano* and, say, the tepid work of young Blue Note trumpeter Marcus Printup, and then say that they both outstrip Miles Davis's *On The Corner* (accorded only two)? Moments later one finds they all languish in the shadow of *The Benny Goodman Story*. European free improvisation, in particular, is treated with immense respect and depth: nothing here is consigned to some kind of beyond the pale ghetto. Another plus is the attention given to somewhat marginal contemporary musicians: Bill Dixon, Burt Morris and Joe McPhee, for instance.

Unlike some jazz tomes, this one is

aware of life (and music) beyond jazz, which means a very reference to *Star Trek*, literary asides and the odd quirky parallel — George Russell is compared to Marce Cunningham, for example. There is occasional intimidating mention of the 'serious collector', but the book would serve equally well the punter wondering where to start with Sonny Rollins as the specialist trying to assemble the big picture on reinforced shelving. Perhaps the only unanswerable question comes in the middle of a Chico Freeman review: 'Who, for instance, is Rocky Knauer, and why is he allowed out with a contrabass?'.

WILL MONTGOMERY

Leaving Home

By Michael Hall

FABER & FABER (Hbk £20)

Pity the poor historian, obliged at every turn to confront history's bloodily-minded refusal to happen in chapters. And yet somehow the bothersome mess has to be ordered, or we'll never make sense of it. Michael Hall's *Leaving Home* calls itself 'a conducted tour of 20th century music' (like under Classical), and takes its structure from the recent Channel Four TV series of the same name, which functioned in part as a showcase for Simon Rattle. Rattle duly appears on the book's cover, even though all he has written is a short foreword.

There's more of Rattle here than meets the eye, however, for Hall's 'tour' follows the route laid out by the TV series: instead of a merely linear narrative, we get a kind of patchwork arranged in chapters with headings like 'Rhythm', 'Colour', 'America' or 'Music Now'. Just as Rattle's *Leaving Home* could find no room for such eminences as Sibelius, Janacek, Prokofiev, so Hall more or less follows suit, although he's not slavish about this: he finds space for Brian Ferneyhough, whose music didn't make it into the TV series, and omits Morton Feldman, who did.

Ferneyhough in Feldman out! provides a useful summary of Hall's aesthetic priorities, for he definitely prefers Ferneyhough's fleshly complexity to Feldman's skeletal bones. You or I may think Feldman matters more, just as we may find it surprising that Mark-Anthony Turnage,

Erik Satie: A Mammal's Notebook

Ed by Ornella Volta

ATLAS (Pbk £14.95)



Like John Cage, Erik Satie is a composer more often talked about than actually listened to. His idiosyncratic compositions, realised on the cusp of the century, are now almost automatically cited as precursors of vast tracts of New Music. Minimalism, New Age, elevator music, the Ambient chill-out zone. But how many are actually familiar with the ravishing wallpaper of the three *Gosselines* and the pivotal *Musque d'Ambrémoulin*, or the proto-machine music of *Entrée et Vexations*? *A Mammal's Notebook*,

which collects fragments of the composer's writings — including prose poems, performance notes, essays on his acolyte Debussy as well as Stravinsky, autobiographical reviews, barbed asides — won't tell you what Satie's music actually sounds like, but it does give an insight into the life and times of an artist whose existence seemed to be the last word in detached, performed aestheteism. Like Satie's music, much of the material appears whimsical, the idle doodlings of a café society eccentric, but dig through the surface and you uncover sly notions subverting concert hall etiquette, colonial ambors, rampant consumerism. Best of all are the private classified ads which Satie drew for his own amusement. These give a flavour of his eclectic interests, which spanned the occult, alien civilisations, alternative lifestyles, futuristic fantasies. The advert reproduced here advertises a trip on "The Invisible" Large Transversal linearity Dr Paillon — Sorcerer". Where do I book my ticket?

TONY HERRINGTON

undoubtedly an important composer, makes it into the final chapter on "Music Now", when Louis Andriessen doesn't. On the other hand, although what gets left out matters, perhaps what gets left in matters more.

In that sense, Hall's concluding survey of what's happening now, which might have been the book's greatest asset, feels perfunctory and unbalanced. Perhaps the key to this imbalance can be found in a statement we find as early as page 22: "Nothing fundamentally new has emerged since 1973, either in serious music or pop." As sweeping generalisations go, that's a pretty broad brush, but it's consistently applied: throughout on page 231 we learn that "after 1973 there were no flags to rally round".

Both statements beg all sorts of questions, which Hall neither asks nor answers. Throughout he's lucid, but rarely passionate. In each chapter he isolates a representative composer or two, then writes about one or more of their works in some detail, which causes problems on several occasions. You can't write about Stravinsky

without saying quite a lot about his innovative sense of rhythm, but in a book like this, a whole page on time signatures in *Symphonies of Wind Instruments* simply gets boring.

The book is handsomely designed. Its broad margins allow for the insertion of quotes from Rattle's TV commentary, quotes which sometimes add something distinctive, sometimes don't. And there are some wonderful photos, the relevance of which is not always apparent: the picture researcher clearly enjoys modern architecture but I'm not sure what the picture of Channel Four's HQ is doing on the same page as Hall's brief survey of bebop (it's a photo, though).

In case I've been too harsh on the book, I should mention what may prove its greatest attraction: time and again Hall's discussion of this or that piece, whether by Conlon Nanorow or György Kurtág, had me longing to hear it. When so much writing on the troublesome century's troublesome music is so and distant, that's not a small achievement.

NICK KIMBERLEY

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david toop

Is there a crisis in American music?

Struggling here, struggling over American music. Sure, I've got Jerru The Damaja, Ghostface Killah, DJ Shadow, all better than passable though none as touched by genius, it seems to me, as some would wish them to be. And I've got Willie Nelson, who pursues an American theme of retrenchment and rediscovery with grace and bitter-sweet wisdom. And I've got some small-label glimmers of hope: Tom Recchioni's *Chavaca*, *Music From The Island Of Anophoro* by Craig Grady and Brad Laner, id battery's *My events*, humming endlessly in the hush by in between nose, plus, of course, the internationalist throughout of Jim O'Rourke and John Zorn — bricolage constructions of spare parts and hitherto unseen components erected in the shadow of corporate towers.

But flying transatlantically, disturbingly, there have been disputes, discussions, disagreements over the gut widening between European and American culture. A reluctant participant in those disputes, I find little to share in the present American conception of music, what it's for, whether it's good or bad, what's significant, why we like what we like or reject what we can't use. I mean, America, Europe, Asia, what use are those words, musicians flying here and there, maybe holed up in Toronto, wired up, more connected by CD purchase, hardware proclivities and e-mail to Leeds than Los Angeles?

I grew up in love with American music. The Crystals, Dionne Warwick, Johnny Burnette, John Cage, Son House, Louis Armstrong, Junior Wells, Nelson Riddle, whatever! The first time I travelled to New York City I felt I had come home. All those years of watching *I Love Lucy*, *Dragnet*, *Naked City*, *Highway Patrol*, *Yogi Berra*, *Top Cat*, even the dust on Manhattan's window ledges and the heat from the radiators felt more familiar than English rain and warmth. All long-gone feelings. Now the gap, clattering with misunderstandings, seared with pangs of disillusionment. That devout love, betrayed by too many idiot films, too many corporate albums, too much schlock, now turning to contempt.

Of course, we find American cyber-culture theorists and their musical byproducts very threadbare, very amusing, maybe distancing ourselves from our own technological backwardness, or clawing out a little patch of space for an anti-American response to technology and feel-the-magic fantasy (some hope). Long-teeth colonisers, fighting off colonisation. Of the North American cultural artifacts that penetrate, I made my way through one from beginning to end: William Gibson, an American holed up in Canada,

writing *Idoru*, sort of hitting it right with the Japanese virtual idol but still transparently besotted with this Mick Jagger, David Bowie, Steven Tyler figure who stands at the centre of the cyclone.

Gibson's characterisation is flimsy, he writes about media, surfaces, the evolution of desires. At the same time, he loves rock 'n' roll. Gut stuff. Guitars, leather jackets, boots and backstage passes. Maybe, in Europe, the trend is towards hearing individual pieces of music as frames in a bigger picture, paragraphs, sentences, even a solitary word in a science fiction scenario. Just a record, who cares who is behind it? Well sometimes, OK, but mostly, just let it be sound, rolling by. A nose in your head, literally in your gut (rather than metaphorically in your fantasy of realism as lived in the rock 'n' roll life) connecting up with other noises through a web of sympathies, through the mediation of noises.

Which makes it so uninteresting to listen, really listen, sit down and listen, to so much music now. But thrilling to think about. You could call this a crisis. Sure feels like a crisis.

Paul Schütze and I were talking, he was saying he had found it refreshing during a visit to Los Angeles, experiencing an American way of listening to music without imposing a self-conscious and often unbearable canon of U and non-U artists, jumping from one thing to the next without the censor of 'should I be seen to be liking this' exerting its influence. I agree, sort of, though I think there are invariably other discriminatory exclusions at work.

But thinking again, the creation of cults, hype and shifting shit lists isn't an accusation of an exponent of its own, as if some arcane form of cultural attractor is at work, a penolectric magnet drawing clusters of disparate cultural activity into temporary focus before allowing

them. I haven't thought this through, but it's notes towards a partial justification of fashion and bad, irrational passions, the superficiality of big culture.

Maybe what this is all about is an anxiety that music will be only clandestinely important in the 21st century. The frenzied activity responsible for the current glut of CDs feels like a last gasp, a refusal to go gently into that good night, before culture becomes software, an extruded paste commissioned solely on the basis of its compatibility within the pumping engines of digital dissemination.

Pessimistic? At the moment, yes. Future anxiety, if not outright depression, feels like the most tangible commodity on offer today at the ideas supermarket. For that reason, I believe that mutations that don't make sense, can't be tided, can't be justified, can't be fully theorised, are more valuable to the developing soul than cyber-utopianism, synthesised corporate magic, New Agerism or nostalgia for soil-rooted eternals.

Recorded music falls all too easily into being raw material for the pumping stations. When a music bursts with vitality — say Janis canid in the early 70s — then its creation has the feel of a deviously productive spare-parts shop, turning out strange functional items for a roaring engine of need. The engine is healthy, full of desire, happy to accept components never seen before. Then the engine becomes flaccid, complacent, repetitive in its desires, intolerant of surprise. The production line is fully functioning by this point, smoothly squaring an endless jet of easily identifiable product into an increasingly swollen receptacle.

My apologies for this tarrage of industrial/ biological metaphors. I'm trying to grasp why two of the loves of my life — music and specifically American music — are losing their attraction, their usefulness, right now. It's a tough problem. A personal crisis. □




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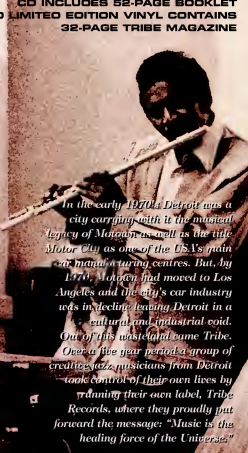
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